



**ECIU POSITION
PAPER FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME 9**

ENHANCING THE IMPACT OF EU RESEARCH & INNOVATION

Brussels | 1 March 2018



ECIU POSITION PAPER FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME 9

ENHANCING THE IMPACT OF EU RESEARCH & INNOVATION

European Research and Innovation funding has proven to be indispensable for the European Consortium of Innovative Universities. ECIU Members stand out as being front runners in fostering knowledge exchange between academia, industry and civil society. ECIU Members develop cross-border relations in a regional context. Framework Programmes past and present have played a crucial role in providing the means to develop this role which today is taken as the model for how universities should act in support of innovation.

ECIU expresses its ideas for the future European Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (FP9) with this position paper. ECIU looks forward to working together with European stakeholders on the future of the European Research & Innovation landscape.

ECIU'S MAIN MESSAGES FOR FP9

- A substantial budget increase to cover the excellent ideas put forward
- Open Innovation to be the underlying approach
- To use impact, in its broadest sense, as a focus for funding distribution
- To provide opportunities to engage more widely with societal actors and citizens
- Build bridges to higher educational policies

A NEED FOR A SUBSTANTIAL INCREASE TO THE BUDGET

ECIU joins the existing calls for a substantial increase to the European R&I budget to at least **160 billion euros**¹. Equally, ECIU calls for real European wide commitment to achieve the Barcelona objectives of 3% of GDP to be invested in R&I. The Framework Programme has over the years been expected to deliver on a very broad range of scientific, industrial and societal goals, supported by ECIU. The current levels of funding are inadequate to achieve the critical mass needed for both excellent research and innovation. The decline in success rates in Horizon 2020 has reached a point where this is now a disincentive to apply.

ECIU recognises that as public funding does not keep up with the rise of student numbers and research needs, **industry and society need to contribute their part** to help maximise the impact and increase the leverage of public funding. ECIU therefore welcomes the continuation and further development of funding instruments that support a broad spectrum of research and innovation activities.

SUPPORTING OPEN INNOVATION

As universities that have traditionally been involved in developing regional Open Innovation ecosystems, ECIU welcomes the principles of **Open Innovation**. To maximise the impact, Open Innovation should be a driving principle of FP9, but also take into account the competitive requirements of enterprises. ECIU also welcomes the principle of Open Science and support for 'blue sky' research at the European level, recognising that this kind of research is ultimately what makes the EU an attractive place for the location of global research teams that provide the critical mass to fuel the innovation pipeline². ECIU welcomes stronger pro-

motion of Responsible Partnering principles³.

ECIU looks forward to the formation of a European Innovation Council and agrees with the High-Level Group of Innovators that the future EIC must focus on the innovator and high-risk inventions. A trust-based and light funding tool is very welcome as are proposals to develop access to risk financing for upscaling. ECIU regards it crucial that universities are represented in the advisory board of the EIC, as universities are indispensable in the innovation ecosystem.

¹See Recommendation 1 of the *Report of the independent High Level Group on maximising the impact of EU Research & Innovation* - Chaired by Pascal Lamy. And the European Commission call for a similar amount in its communication A new, modern Multiannual Financial Framework for a European Union that delivers efficiently on its priorities post-2020.

²ECIU proudly supports the Open Science declaration.

³<http://www.eua.be/activities-services/projects/current-projects/research-and-innovation/Responsible-Partnering-Initiative.aspx>

SUPPO

USE OF IMPACT AS A CRITERIA IN ITS BROADEST SENSE

ECIU researchers are accustomed to addressing issues around the **impact** of research. It is essential that FP9 places the criteria of potential impact and excellence in a broad context. Project proposals, research careers and universities must be evaluated and rewarded on concepts like open science, developing talents, learning outcomes, innovation, interdisciplinarity and regional impact.

ECIU gives a cautious welcome to the exploration of a **mission**-driven approach to some areas of research. Well defined missions can liberate innovative thinking and encourage taking more ambitious goals that are essential for seeking breakthroughs. ECIU wishes to see bottom-up approaches supported. Missions should have broad themes, be flexible and open to cater for different challenges in different regions of Europe aiming towards stronger social cohesion. Crucial to the success of missions will be their management and governance structure. ECIU recommends that this should not be prescriptive.

To realise global impact, and enhance European impact, ECIU Members embrace internationalisation. Openness to the world is a basic condition for leading innovative universities. **Internationalisation** brings together shared specialisms, cultural diversity, expertise and defined characteristics. This is crucial for realising excellent research and innovation. Full engagement with the UK remains an obvious win-win for the UK and the EU.



Although investing in research is necessary, it is not enough to fuel innovation. Having the right regional **ecosystems** in place is essential. Ecosystems link researchers, innovators, industries and governments to foster creativity, entrepreneurship and impact. The development of regional and cross-country innovation ecosystems must be further supported. Industrial partners, universities and increasingly social entrepreneurs must be included in this policy. ECIU encourages the use of Smart Specialisation initiatives to foster the complementarity of innovation efforts as the Members support through this network. By investing in networks, the EU will provide a backbone necessary for the materialisation of creativity and free circulation of information and innovators.

used by the local community and / or international partners, should not only receive funding on project basis, but also in a more sustainable way.

Key to university-industry engagement, promotion of entrepreneurial skills and support for start-ups is a well-developed **Knowledge Transfer service**, facilitating the innovation ecosystem. KT officers link the university and industry, assist researchers with exploitation, and identify transfer opportunities. The capacity to deal with intricate intellectual property agreements and transfer of know-how to different kinds of stakeholder holds the key to successful exploitation of research. Despite many studies showing that these kinds of services and expertise are essential to creating value from research, funding for these offices is a challenge. ECIU urges that the value of professional KT officers is taken into consideration in the FP9 funding regime to ensure that those performing this role, especially in innovation focussed instruments, can offer this as a service to projects.

ECIU welcomes the proposed **MSCA Industrial Research Fellowship**⁴. Having experts from industry to co-work part-time in academia fosters university-industry collaborations and enriches education. ECIU recommends that further funding instruments tailored for opening and sharing of research infrastructures with industry and society be considered.

“ *Open Innovation depends on the creation of an innovative community and a general cultural shift in the society at large outside the university campuses.* ”

ECIU Members demonstrate the value of local hosts, projects and infrastructures (including Research Infrastructures) that are capable of channelling the funding through open lightweight calls. ECIU encourages the development of funding instruments that are flexible. In this respects, funding for excellent **research infrastructures** that also are

⁴See Recommendation 3 of the Report of the independent High Level Group on maximising the impact of EU Research & Innovation - Chaired by Pascal Lamy.

PORTING OPEN INNOVATION

ENGAGING WITH SOCIETAL ACTORS AND CITIZENS

ECIU, through its experience with **regional engagement**, recognises the importance of collaboration with society, public institutions, industry and citizens. These collaborations stimulate the elaboration of new value chains that support regional development, global impact and fuel strong research and innovation.

“ *ECIU Members have a long history of engaging in novel forms of partnerships, connecting to the local community and society at large.* ”

This culture for collaboration is supported by including real-life teaching and learning in curriculum development, as well as the design of university campuses that focus on co-creation, co-innovation and co-location, to boost (regional) impact and make open innovation flourish. The EU can take **partnerships** forward by mobilising joint investment in established missions, through a simple and flexible co-fund mechanism. The availability of other sources of funding and capabilities should be a key guiding criterion.

To further develop co-creation, there is a need to have options to involve citizens without the demand of a legal entity representing the citizens in projects. To this end lump sum funding models need to be available to fund citizens and interest base organisations. Moreover, European frameworks for collaboration competitions might encourage **co-creation** and citizen science. At a European level, the issue of multi-languages needs to be addressed.

To **communicate** science to a broader public, the need for financial support for this activity to be carried out to an adequate standard must be recognised.



INVOLVE EDUCATION

At ECIU Member universities, innovation and entrepreneurship are embedded in higher education. Societal stakeholders are involved in curriculum development and problem-based learning, and students are encouraged to engage in research and receive **entrepreneurship** training.

ECIU Members embrace the renewed agenda of higher education. ECIU sees itself as Europe's first **European University Network**⁵ in synergy with the initiative for 20 European University Networks. ECIU Members act at the forefront of **modern universities** and see themselves as a **coalition of the willing**, willing to change and adapt to societal developments. Intensive cooperation between universities contributes significantly to the integration of capacities and networking at the European level.

The role of universities in providing **higher education** must be recognised in the formation of FP9. Industry 4.0 will generate a very strong need for lifelong access to higher education as essential to maintaining a skills base that can cope with rapid changes to work force demands.

ECIU encourages moves towards a more integrated approach towards knowledge policies, i.e., to take advantage of synergies with existing programmes such as Erasmus+ and the European Social Fund, in order to support skills and competence development and researchers' careers. ECIU welcomes initiatives to combine these funds and policies in a **European Education, Research and Innovation Area**.

⁵<https://www.eciu.org/news/eciu-is-ready-to-work-on-the-european-education-area>



SIMPLIFICATION

While ECIU Members appreciate that the Horizon 2020 application and evaluation procedures are amongst **the best and fairest** of any system of funding for interdisciplinary projects, the problem of over-subscription, recruitment of evaluators and time taken to prepare and evaluate proposals needs to be addressed.

The **proposal template** could be made more explicit about what is relevant information to argue the case for funding (tailored to the instrument and in some cases topic), to assist proposers to answer and provide supporting evidence for the key assessment criteria more succinctly. Furthermore, using this to **shorten proposals** so that evaluators might reasonably be able to read through proposals and deliver a judgement in a time frame that can be accommodated outside normal working hours. This would enable those in employment positions not able or willing to permit time off to make themselves available. Finally, for the award of substantial funding in areas where the competition is close, consider the use of **face to face presentations** for the final selection.

Regarding output-based funding, the priority is **simplification for applicants**, including the consortium (leader). The insecurity that is a naturally part of research (outcomes) must be kept in mind and not result in financial insecurity. Granting an option to choose from is not helping simplification, parallel systems only create discussions within consortia.

ECIU acknowledges the need for **rationalisation** of research and innovation instruments that currently exists. ECIU expects the EIC to streamline the innovation instruments. There are more opportunities to simplify the EU funding landscape. EU funding schemes with similar intervention logic should be combined. This could make the participation in the EU funding more flexible. Concerning `Spreading Excellence and Widening Participation`, better synergies and complementarity with other EU funding programmes, such as the structural funds, are needed.

Beneficiaries waste valuable re-sources during the project management due to **non-homogeneous interpretation** of the grant agreement terms by staff of the European Commission or its agencies (REA, ERCEA, etc.) which needs to be addressed. The Commission needs to ensure consistency with their own policies across the framework programme - for example while there is a focus on gender, paying maternity leave from project budgets (e.g. in Marie Curie ITN) can be problematic.

Finally, clearer **feedback** would help improve the quality of future project proposals. Recognising the investment of time in preparing proposals and providing better information on success rates. Also easier access to helpdesk responses before the call opens, for example a platform to post questions as is done for tenders, could be considered.

ABOUT

The European Consortium of Innovative Universities is a consortium of research intensive universities, with collective emphasis on innovation, creativity and societal impact. The member universities have a long track record in university-industry interaction and collaborating within their region. Formed in 1997, the Members form a **coalition of the willing**, willing to change traditional university culture and methods of working. ECIU looks forward to collaborate with European stakeholders on the nature of a modern, innovative university.

Aalborg University

is ranked as the best European university for engineering.

Dublin City University

is Ireland's University of Enterprise and Ireland's leading university for licensing and innovation partnerships with SMEs and multinational companies.

Hamburg University of Technology

offers one of the top 5 combined Management and Engineering study degree programs in Germany.

Kaunas University of Technology

return on Investment of business incubator Start-up Space is 600 % - taxes paid by start-ups in 5 years exceed the investment of the KTU 6 times.

Linköping University

is ranked as Sweden's foremost university in terms of societal engagement and impact, having produced the highest number of innovative spinouts in Sweden during the last decade.

Tampere University of Technology

is ranked on the 11th position in the world, and the 4th in Europe for industry collaboration according to THE rankings.

TEC de Monterrey

is on the Top 25 Undergraduate Schools (NO. 14) for the Princeton Review's Top Schools for Entrepreneurship Studies for 2018

The University of Nottingham

has a £1.1bn economic impact on the UK every year.

The Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

led the UAB-CIE Sphere, comprising of scientific, technological and business parks, multinational companies, SMEs, foundations and city councils.

The University of Aveiro

was designated as best-practice by the National Strategic Reference Framework Observatory, for its close cooperation with the region.

University of Stavanger

produces more business ideas per researcher than any other university in Norway.

University of Twente

was awarded best technical university and university with the highest impact in the Netherlands.



Olga Wessels

Head of Brussels Office
olga.wessels@eciu.org

ECIU Brussels Office

Avenue de Tervueren 35
1040 Brussels, Belgium

www.eciu.org
@ECIUniversities