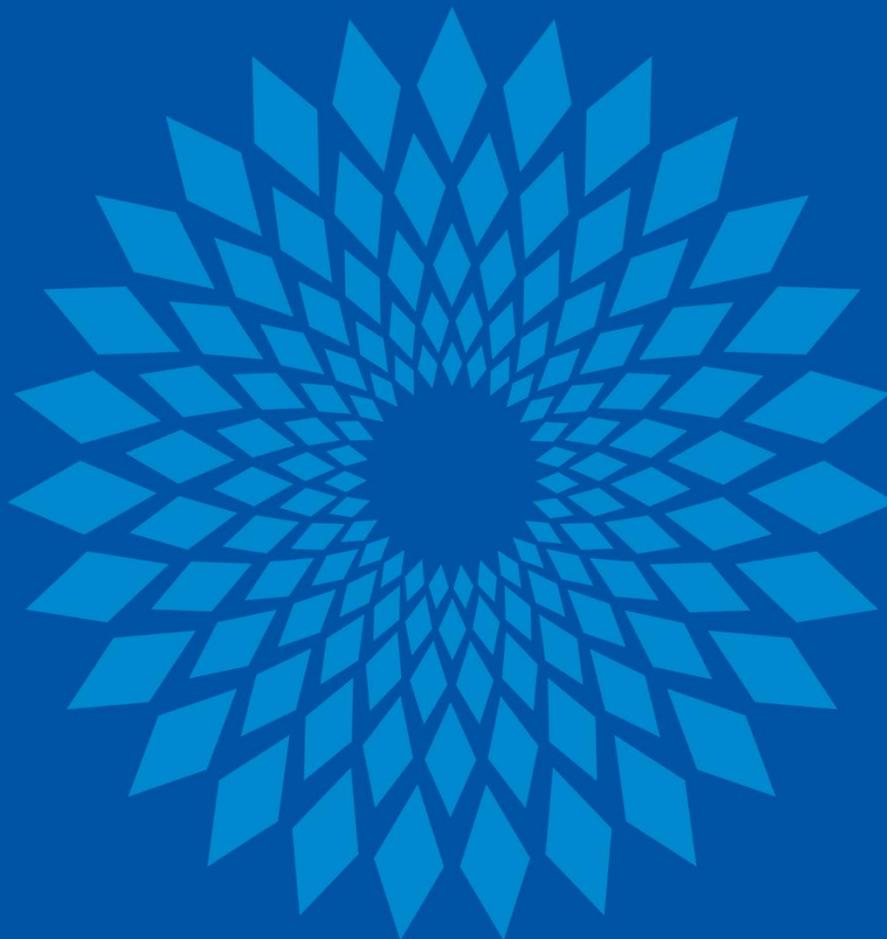


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Czech Presidency of the Council
of the European Union



Political debate

Informal Meeting of Ministers
responsible for Competitiveness
– Research formation

Prague, Czech Republic
21 – 22 July 2022

Briefing note for the political debate on synergies in the research and innovation funding in Europe

Synergies in research and innovation funding have been a key prerequisite for maximising both the public and private investments to advance science and technology in Europe. **Coherent investment planning, aimed at strengthening the fundamental pillars of the knowledge society and economy, has become the ultimate goal and objective when it comes to the design, creation and implementation of the EU and Member State policies.**

Synergies have long been a cross-cutting element in research and innovation policy-making, and they have also been sought in relation to policy-making approaches in other sectorial domains, such as education, industry and cohesion. Research and innovation are universal tools for addressing grand societal, ecological and economic challenges, which require knowledge-based solutions. **It is, therefore, essential to advance alignment and/or harmonisation of policy-making frameworks, implementation instruments, as well as financial and administrative rules in order to exploit the full potential of the multiplier/leverage effects of each individual sectorial policy.**

Synergies in research and innovation funding increase the efficiency of investments, which are devoted to science and technology, since they prevent fragmentation of resources and duplication of efforts. They also lead to an increase in the intensity of research and innovation funding. **Once synergies are found between research and innovation policy-making and regional development policy-making, they catalyse and stimulate societal and economic development, with a potential to bridge the research gap and close the innovation divide within the European Research Area.**

For these reasons, the European Commission, Member States and European stakeholders – including research performing organisations, businesses and industries – have already made substantial efforts at the policy-making, legislative, administrative and funding levels to facilitate synergies and harvest their full potential.

The EU programming period from 2014 to 2020 piloted the implementation of such synergies. The legislative framework stressed the importance of synergies between the Horizon 2020 EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, and the European Structural and Investment Fundsⁱ, and also called for the development of close synergies with other EU programmes.ⁱⁱ Moreover, the Commission guidelines outlined a number of possibilities for combining various funding resources in a complementary way.ⁱⁱⁱ

The legislative framework for the current EU programming period from 2021 to 2027 elaborates on synergies in even greater detail. It sets legal basis for concrete forms of synergies like alternative, combined and cumulative funding and transfers of resources. It also highlights, in particular, specific directly managed EU programmes, where synergies shall be sought and put in practice throughout their implementation, including in the phases of programme design, planning, project selection, management, communication, dissemination, exploitation of results, monitoring, auditing and evaluation.^{iv, v}

Furthermore, **the Commission Communications^{vi} and the Council Conclusions and/or Recommendations^{vii} on the new European Research Area policy-making framework underline the critical importance of synergies, to be implemented across all the research and innovation funding instruments, and also in conjunction with other sectorial domains**, in particular with the European Education Area and the European Higher Education Area. In addition, **the Commission guidelines present specific tools how to put synergies in practice.**^{viii}

The financial instruments introduced into the European research and innovation funding landscape to support the advancement of science and technology, including the directly managed programmes and the EU programmes with shared management between the European Commission and Member States, have been growing in number. They aim particularly to support the post-pandemic recovery and the European economy's twin green and digital transitions, to strengthen the competitiveness of the EU globally, to reinforce European society's preparedness to face grand societal, ecological and economic challenges, and to promote European cohesion.

In consequence, the research and innovation funding ecosystem in Europe – consisting, among others, of the Horizon Europe EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (with schemes such as the European Partnerships or EU Missions), the Digital Europe Programme, the Cohesion Policy Funds, the Recovery and Resilience Facility or the InvestEU Fund, with all of these instruments being linked to the investments at Member State level – is becoming increasingly complex, creating new challenges in terms of policy-making alignment and/or harmonisation.

Against this background, **full capitalisation on synergies in the European research and innovation funding is still pending and calls for an advanced step.**

In response, **the Czech Presidency of the Council of the EU held a flagship conference on Synergies in the Research and Innovation Funding in Europe on 7–8 July 2022 in Prague, providing European research and innovation stakeholders with a high-level forum for sharing experiences, exchanging good practice examples and identifying deficiencies in the implementation of synergies.**

The conference addressed the topic of synergies from various angles and different perspectives. While the plenary sessions aimed to set the high-level political scene and communicate on synergies in the general context, the panel debates, including four parallel break-out sessions, discussed synergies in more detail and focused on their implementation in the fields of research infrastructures, European Partnerships, EU Missions, innovation and the EU Cohesion Policy.

Conclusions of the event were incorporated as inputs to the Prague Declaration on Synergies in the Research and Innovation Funding in Europe, which sets out specific actions and measures, and invites European research and innovation stakeholders to continue to remove the barriers identified to make full use of synergies.

Following the informal meeting of European Research Ministers, **the Czech Presidency will approach European Research Ministers, asking them to support the Prague Declaration on Synergies at the political level by issuing an endorsement letter.** The outcome of this endorsement initiative will be presented at the EU Competitiveness Council of 2 December 2022 in Brussels.

European Ministers responsible for Research are, hereby, invited to participate in the political debate on synergies in research and innovation funding in Europe, and to answer the questions below, while limiting their interventions to a maximum of 3 minutes.

Questions for the political debate

- 1) *Based on the lessons learned over the period 2014–2020, what are the main barriers and obstacles preventing the full potential of synergies in research and innovation funding from being exploited, both at the European level and in your country?*
- 2) *Which concrete measures do you undertake at national level for the period 2021–2027 to harvest the full potential of synergies in the research and innovation funding, and which particular areas are you going to address?*

ⁱ *Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006.*

ⁱⁱ *Regulation (EU) No 1291/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 establishing Horizon 2020 – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2014–2020) and repealing Decision No 1982/2006/ECEU Regulation No 1291/2013.*

ⁱⁱⁱ *Commission Guidance for Policy-Makers and Implementing Bodies: Enabling Synergies between European Structural and Investment Funds, Horizon 2020 and other Research, Innovation and Competitiveness-Related Union Programmes, 2014.*

^{iv} *Regulation (EU) 2021/695 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28th April 2021 establishing Horizon Europe – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, laying down its rules for participation and dissemination, and repealing Regulations (EU) No 1290/2013 and (EU) No 1291/2013.*

^v *Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 emphasising synergies and complementarities as an instrument to optimise the added value from the EU and Member State investments.*

^{vi} *In particular the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions of 30 September 2020 on a New ERA for Research and Innovation.*

^{vii} *In particular the Council Conclusions of 1 December 2020 on the New European Research Area and the Council Recommendation of 26 November 2021 on a Pact for Research and Innovation in Europe.*

^{viii} *Commission Notice – Synergies between Horizon Europe and ERDF programmes of 5th July 2022 providing guidelines to put synergies in practice in the EU programming period 2021–2027.*