

Informal Meeting of Competitiveness Ministers responsible for Research Santander 27-28 July 2023

Policy debate - Briefing document on the Horizon Europe Strategic Planning 2025-2027

One of the key features of the European Research Area (ERA) is **promoting synergies of the research and innovation policies, and programmes and competitiveness** in the EU and Member States. Furthermore, the Council Recommendation on a Pact for Research and Innovation in Europe of 26 November 2021 calls for *Union-level policy coordination and support, from the strategic planning and design stages to the implementation and monitoring stages, to ensure progress towards the ERA priorities.*

The successive EU framework programmes (FP) for Research and Innovation (R&I) are the main instruments to achieve the objectives of the ERA. The 9th FP, Horizon Europe¹, and its Specific programme² establish the multiannual strategic planning of R&I activities as a novelty to ensure **alignment between general objectives and their implementation** and contribute to **the development and implementation of EU and national policies and priorities** -thereby strengthening the ERA. Moreover, the Strategic Plan seeks to achieve **continuity and coherence of funding** measures beyond the work programmes to tackle any challenges, opportunities and crises that might arise. It also provides **strategic orientations** in priority policy areas and aims at fostering **synergies** with national and regional funding programmes through R&I actions. In its design, the European Commission shall ensure early involvement and extensive exchanges with the Member States, and with the European Parliament, encompassing consultation of stakeholders, citizens and civil society.

The Commission has recently published the **Horizon Europe Strategic Plan 2025-2027³ analysis**, which stresses the importance of the EU's investments in R&I to address the challenges of our time and to improve the ability of the EU to translate excellent science into market solutions, fostering its competitiveness. It also recalls the need for a coordinated and strategic approach to R&I at the EU level to ensure that resources such as skills and funds are effectively invested, and that the benefits of R&I are widely shared

¹ Regulation (EU) 2021/695 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 April 2021 establishing Horizon Europe – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, laying down its rules for participation and dissemination

² Council Decision (EU) 2021/764 of 10 May 2021 establishing the Specific Programme implementing Horizon Europe – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation

³ https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-05/ec_rtd_he-strategic-plan-2025-27-analysis.pdf

across all Member States and beyond. The analysis identifies **key political, socioeconomic and environmental factors** relevant to the EU and national policy priorities and provides an overview of R&I activities and gaps. It contributes to the preparation of the second Strategic Plan covering the years 2025-2027 and provide inspiration for the next FP.

Given the political significance of the strategic planning in responding to the EU challenges and competitiveness through R&I, it is essential to **ensure a Member State level discussion**. The aim is to guarantee that National and Union policies are mutually consistent and to foster the alignment between Horizon Europe's general objectives and its implementation in the upcoming Strategic Plan 2025-2027, as well as in the future framework programmes.

Questions for the exchange of views

In the light of the above, ministers are invited to give their views on the following questions:

1. Considering the design and implementation of the first Strategic Plan, **has it successfully achieved its objective** of aligning Horizon Europe's general objectives with the EU and national policies and priorities?
2. What are the **main lessons learnt and improvements** that could be applied to the strategic planning process and, how to foster early and extensive exchanges with Member States?
3. How can the strategic planning process better address the **restraints to take up R&I results and improve the competitiveness of the Union** while ensuring a **balanced approach to R&I** at all stages of development?