

Industrial competitiveness as ‘societal challenge’?

Ensuring accountability and societal impact in Horizon Europe

CSO reaction to the Commission’s FP9 proposal

The European Commission proposal for a regulation establishing the Union’s ninth research and innovation (R&I) framework programme *Horizon Europe*, suggests to **include “industrial competitiveness” in the objectives and name of the future 2nd pillar “global challenges”**. **This would be a serious mistake.**

Public investments must generate public returns. Publically funded R&I should thus balance its focus between scientific excellence, economic and societal impact. Industry is a key partner also in delivering societal impact, but **merging and blurring profit-oriented objectives with societal impact-oriented objectives** risks limiting the already-scarce funding available for addressing societal challenges, endangers a needs-based R&I agenda, threatens the traceability of public funding needed to monitor public return on public investments and risks further excluding citizens and civil society from R&I.

As Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) we therefore urge Member States and the European Parliament to secure an Independent pillar for global challenges

- **Whose objectives and priority setting focus solely on addressing societal challenges, guided by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Climate Agreement**, acknowledging that excellent R&I in this area will create quality jobs and has a significant economic return, in and of itself, and without adding “industrial competitiveness” to the programme pillar;
- **That is co-programmed with citizens and civil society**, acknowledging them as key stakeholders in identifying and addressing societal challenges and ensuring a needs-based R&I priority setting. In particular, a roadmap is urgently needed on how Horizon Europe will overcome barriers to CSO and citizens engagement.
- **Assesses project proposals based primarily on their potential to deliver on societal challenges**; and measures performance based on **adequate societal impact indicators** that focus on the progress towards the realisation of the SDGs;
- **Focusses on delivering sustainable alternatives** to our current high growth, high consumption models and safe, effective, affordable and accessible R&I solutions to improve people’s lives and well-being.

To ensure public return on investment and accountability, all future pillars and programme parts of *Horizon Europe* - including European Partnerships - need to include adequate safeguards, that mainstream **sustainable development**, define and monitor **societal impact**, apply strict **ethical standards**, guarantee **open access** to research results, promote open access to research data (with strict criteria for derogations), make the programme as **transparent and participatory** as possible, and report on the **participation of CSOs** in not just the implementation but also the programming and monitoring of programme activities.

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