

swissuniversities

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swissuniversities' view on the next European framework programme for research and innovation (FP9)

This document illustrates the view of swissuniversities on FP9. swissuniversities is the Rectors' Conference of Swiss Higher Education Institutions. It performs coordination tasks and acts as the national rectors' conference for all universities, universities of applied sciences and universities of teacher education in Switzerland. In particular, swissuniversities tackles questions about **research**, **innovation** and **education**, which together move societies forward. In the following paragraphs, swissuniversities describes its vision for a creative FP9 built on the interplay between research, innovation and education, and highlights the importance of trans-pillar activities to build a solid, unified community around FP9.

Creative science: science for the sake of science

Scientific progress has an essential value for individuals and for the society. Through its framework programmes, the creation of the European Research Council and the promotion of scientists' mobility and welfare, Europe has embraced the principle of creativity through freedom and independent thinking. The next framework programme should keep ensuring that creative scientists are free to ask questions and look for answers taking their own approach. While promoting excellent science and funding excellent ideas, Europe should stand beside scientists in disseminating that fundamental research has an obvious impact on society, an impact that springs from the work of a whole community. Expecting impact from individual projects addressing fundamental questions results in either distortion of free thinking or prosaic proposals, which both do not serve the purpose of excellence. Science does have impact on society simply because of its role in educating young scientists and laying down the basis for innovation.

The next framework programme, together with other European funding programmes like the successor of Erasmus+, could then include specific, trans-pillar measures to foster education through science, with the aim of diffusing thinking based on evidence. Such measures should target not only education of young scientists, but also pupils, students and laypeople. However, they should not represent an increased load on researchers, who must focus on research, but instead be addressed to dedicated professionals.

Moreover, the next framework programme as a whole should promote research-based innovation and again facilitate trans-pillar, multidirectional interaction between researchers and innovators. For example, researchers awarded with an ERC Proof-of-concept could have a facilitated access to innovation measures and innovators funded by the EU be supported in going back to science whenever they propose excellent ideas.

Creative innovation: innovation for better life

The difficulty in Europe in translating science into innovation, fostering disruptive innovation and creating an innovation culture pleads for a re-thinking of European innovation policy. With respect to that, the creation of the European Innovation Council is certainly welcomed by Swiss Higher Education Institutions. The first issue to be addressed is the idea itself of innovation: how does Europe want to take forward its society? To create a stronger Europe and a happier society, the European Union should promote innovation in all possible aspects of people's lives. New technology, new social dynamics, new artistic creation, new education models, they will all shape an innovative Europe, where innovation improves people daily life. Innovators of any background should feel part of the same family and enjoy an open innovation environment.

Whether the next framework programme should focus on market-creating innovation, on disruptive innovation, on incremental innovation brings the question of whether such a declared focus is in fact necessary and useful. If the aim is innovating Europe, innovators should be free to propose their ideas and the framework programme ensures that funding goes exclusively to excellence. Therefore the next framework programme should be simply designed to foster bottom-up innovation from various innovators, especially those that cannot easily access funding, e.g. start-ups, SME, research institutes, non-profit organizations.

In promoting innovation, the next framework programme should foster international collaborations, which represent genuine European added value and contribute to widening participation. However, similarly to the ERC, monobeneficiary funding should be allowed to give voice to newcomer innovators that bring excellent, novel ideas and wish to enter sectors in which they still need to build connections.

Creative education: education for a healthy society

It is hard to imagine a framework programme for research and innovation that does not build on education. As stated by the Lamy's High Level Group, Europe needs "an education system that fosters more innovative and risk-friendly culture". This will be achieved by promoting research on education, fostering educational innovation in schools and Higher Education Institutions and diffusing adult continuing education. Education has a tangible impact on people's employability. Education should then be considered in all three pillars either as a research subject or a source of innovation or a societal challenge and effort should be made to coordinate education activities between FP9 and other European programmes, such as the successor of Erasmus+. By promoting education, the framework programme will contribute to the increase of people's employability and the creation of a healthier society in which trust overcomes suspicion.

Education could be linked to one of the first "Missions" of FP9 as it does represent a societal challenge. The Sustainable Development Goal four of the United Nations calls for "inclusive and quality education for all" and promotion of "lifelong learning". Europe and its Higher Education Institutions have a leading role to play in promoting quality education on a global scale. On the one side, a dedicated Mission would allow European educational institutions to provide their experience to non-European countries, in a research and innovation based cooperative effort; on the other side, Education as a Mission would improve Europe ability to adapt training and educational processes to the needs of its open and fast-changing society.

Specific considerations

Structure	>	Keep three pillars
	>	Promote trans-pillar interactions
	>	Opt by default for bottom-up calls
European Research Council (ERC)	>	Keep the ERC independent
	>	Facilitate innovation based on ERC-funded projects and research inspired by innovation projects
European Innovation Council (EIC)	>	Build a transdisciplinary EIC
	>	Take inspiration from the ERC
	>	Consider regional, but scalable innovation
Missions	>	Align missions with the Sustainable development goals of the United Nations
	>	Connect stronger all three sides of the knowledge triangle
	>	Make instruments simple and clear for applicants
	>	Make the design of Missions transparent
Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities (SSAH)	>	Include SSAH in advisory boards, including the EIC
Follow-up funding	>	Facilitate innovation-to-research and research-to-innovation transition by funding follow-up projects
Work programmes	>	Make the design of work programmes transparent
European added value	>	Promote collaborative projects, but allow also small size consortia and monobeneficiary grants (even in innovation)
	>	Promote co-funding
Open Science	>	Make FP9-funded projects open
	>	Coordinate national efforts
	>	Implement the concept of responsible research and innovation (RRI)
Performance	>	Do not force researchers to prose on impact
	>	Consider impact of the whole FP, not of individual projects
	>	Consult the community on performance indicators
	>	Consider success rate, quality of evaluation feedbacks and multi-directional brain circulation