

## ERRIN Reflection Paper

# Mission-orientation within Research and Innovation Policy and FP9

### *Call for feedback on missions*

## Introduction

A mission-oriented policy, especially when looking at transformative missions, will go beyond a research and innovation policy remit. Linking missions with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals ties the missions to Europe's main societal challenges and positions Europe as a key research and innovation player at a global level. At the same time, it is important that the missions are adequately embedded in the priorities of the European Union (e.g. through a 'Europe 2030 strategy', the European Commission's President's priorities, etc...). ERRIN considers that the mission approach is an opportunity to overcome policy fragmentation, to break down silos, and to avoid short-term thinking. Missions will also be an opportunity to strengthen public engagement through the involvement of regional innovation ecosystems. Missions could serve as a uniting force between various policy areas, funding programmes, initiatives, and institutional actors.

## Mission design - mixing top-down and bottom-up

ERRIN is in favour of a strong alignment of missions to key national and regional priorities, especially Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3), to avoid duplication of effort, and to ensure complementarity as well as the impact of research and innovation funding at all levels.

ERRIN emphasises that mission objectives should be realistic and measurable. The missions should develop a framework that ensures a strong alignment between different policy areas at the EU level, such as research and innovation and industrial policy. At the regional level significant progress towards this direction has already been made thanks to S3. ERRIN sees S3 as also providing a useful point of reference for future efforts towards a better alignment of policies at all levels of government.

ERRIN further agrees that the suggested models of 'Accelerator' and 'Transformative' missions are an innovative way of framing the challenges that need to be overcome. A future missions approach should therefore develop a balanced mix of the proposed models across identified challenges:

- **Accelerator missions** – addressing a challenge which is potentially solvable and can therefore relatively easily be reduced to discrete goals with the fundamental nature of the mission being to accelerate change in a set direction;
- **Transformative missions** – where solutions are unknown, and the problems are 'wicked' and escape simple definition. The fundamental nature of these missions is to transform an entire economic or socio-technical system and deals in large measure with cultural change.

We encourage the European Commission to carefully consider the way in which mission objectives are set. ERRIN considers that missions should not be entirely managed and designed from a top-down perspective. Rather, ERRIN suggests that mission objectives are at least partly crowd-sourced. The rationale for this stems from the necessity to ensure that missions, especially those which are transformative, resonate with large cross-sections of European society (benefitting from a shared sense of urgency). ERRIN, therefore shares Professor Marianna Mazzucato's position when she states that missions must be *"as open as possible and as bottom up as possible"*.

As ERRIN has highlighted in its recommendations for FP9, a mission-oriented policy under the next Framework Programme should be flexible, allowing further bottom-up solutions, and support the linking up of regional innovation ecosystems from various parts of Europe. Changing the approach from prescriptive calls to mission orientation should encourage involving new actors (including further representation of Social Sciences and Humanities) and open doors for a multitude of innovative solutions.

### **Public engagement**

ERRIN supports the Mazzucato report's emphasis on public engagement. However, it is crucial that engagement is sought in a meaningful way. Cities and regions – and thus regional innovation ecosystems – are the right level to engage with the citizens. Citizens become the stakeholders in any such endeavour and therefore have an interest in playing an active role. When further elaborating the mission concept, ERRIN recommends that the term "citizen" should always be well-defined regarding the context (users, NGO's, etc.).

Missions should allow for the *"engagement of national and regional stakeholders"* ensuring proximity to the citizens and greater flexibility in creating ecosystems of different actors. Regional innovation ecosystems are instrumental in bringing key stakeholders together (e.g. the quadruple helix) and forming the basis for mission-focused, globally orientated innovation networks. Missions should further encourage regional innovation ecosystems to come together and propose new bottom-up solutions.

ERRIN considers that local and regional governments are crucial in increasing citizen engagement. As a regional network, ERRIN sees enormous value in assigning local actors and regional governments as points of reference for missions. Excellent science is not implemented in a vacuum, it is implemented in cities and regions - in places. Cities and regions have a long and rich experience in regularly engaging with local interest groups, businesses, community groups, the voluntary sector and individual citizens in varied formal and informal settings, such as town hall meetings, local consultative committees, neighbourhood-level public hearings and local consultation procedures, both online and face-to-face, to name just a few.

## Simplified Governance

The governance of the missions should be carefully considered - and be based on the objective of the mission (transformative vs. accelerator). ERRIN considers that certain components of a coordination instrument for the missions already exist in the EU landscape, such as the European Innovation Partnerships (EIPs)<sup>1</sup> and Joint Technology Initiatives (JTIs).<sup>2</sup>

For ERRIN, the EIPs and the JTIs provide reference points for extremes on the scale of potential governance models for the missions. EIPs provide inspiration for transformative missions as they are designed as platforms bringing together stakeholders within a specific topic area and have a clear focus on societal challenges and cultural change. JTIs focus more on aspects of technology acceleration, combining research and industry communities. ERRIN emphasises the need to take stock of the lessons-learned from EIPs and JTIs, and wherever feasible, use elements of existing instruments and structures.

One of the main objectives of the missions should be to eliminate silos. There is a need to create further coordination, coherence and synergies between the existing instruments (PPPs, FET flagships, etc.), structures, and measures. Creating a coherent framework and simplifying the R&I landscape would ensure quicker and better results (accelerated innovation).

## European leadership

The mission approach should consider Europe's competitive edge on the global stage. It is essential to identify poles of European excellence and global competitiveness. This is to ensure that when we arrive at European solutions to global problems, they are adequately framed in the perspective of global leadership.

The global reach of the missions should be considered, and missions should involve the intellectual capacity of international R&I ecosystems. The European Commission should overcome administrative challenges to mainstream international participation in the Framework Programme and seek to reform administrative issues that currently block their participation. Attracting top talent requires a global perspective, open not just to technical or research skills, but also to policy, regulatory, and soft skills.

## Impact vs. experimentation

Missions must allow for a high degree of experimentation that might result in a failure from time to time. Any pilot, whether focused on technology acceleration or social impact, must be operationally focused on testing the characteristics of system effectiveness, suitability, and survivability. Moreover, missions must ensure that several competitive solutions are tested and applied to a given challenge (where possible, missions should be technologically neutral). Regions and cities provide an excellent platform for such experiments, for example, through the public procurement of innovation.

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<sup>1</sup> Active and Healthy ageing, Agricultural sustainability and productivity, Smart Cities and Communities, Water and Raw Materials.

<sup>2</sup> Innovative Medicines Initiative (IMI2), Clean Sky 2 (CS2), Fuel Cells and Hydrogen (FCH), Electronic Components and Systems for European Leadership (ECSEL), Bio-Based Industries (BBI).

### **About ERRIN**

*ERRIN ([European Regions Research and Innovation Network](#)) is a Brussels-based platform that gathers more than 130 regional organisations in 24 European countries. ERRIN aims to strengthen the regional and local dimension in the EU Research and Innovation policy and programmes. ERRIN promotes knowledge exchange between its members, focusing on joint actions and strategic partnerships to strengthen regional research and innovation capacities and thereby foster sustainable and inclusive growth in regions.*