

## Executive Summary

The European research and innovation policy agenda is at a critical point in time. Now is the time for Europe to make clear choices on the future direction of European research and innovation policy. Now is the time for smart investment in research and innovation.

Drawing on extensive evidence, analysis and experience, the League of European Research Universities (LERU) proposes, in response to the European Commission's Green Paper and Consultation<sup>1</sup>, that the following five key principles must underpin any future European research and innovation framework and makes recommendations for each.

### 1) Focus investment in excellence

- Since research and innovation are instrumental in driving economic and social growth, the criteria for funding must be based on excellence.
- The European Research Council (ERC) has changed the landscape of European Union (EU) funded research and innovation. We strongly support its strengthening and wish to see its funding increased significantly.
- The Marie Curie actions have also been a hallmark of excellence which must continue to be supported.
- To stimulate excellence, investment must focus on attracting talented women and men into research and creating attractive career prospects for them.

### 2) Strike a better balance between directed and non-directed research

- Any future EU funding programme must ensure a well-balanced share between directed and non-directed research. For this to happen, the entire chain of innovation must be taken into account, from basic research to commercialisation.
- Researchers must have the freedom and space to develop their ideas innovatively. We wish to see a larger proportion of EU funding go to bottom-up, investigator-led or non-directed research.
- The Cooperation programme has been effective in funding top-down or directed research and enabling collaboration between academic and non-academic partners. It should be retained, although ways should be found to eliminate barriers to forming successful research ecosystems.
- JPIs and EIPs which have the potential to boost the impact and efficiency of public research should be supported, but they must allow for imaginative frontier research to be carried out within their structures.
- We wish to underline the important role of the social sciences and humanities (SSH) in the research and innovation agenda of the EU. It is crucial that SSH research is stimulated to take up its separate and independent role in pushing the frontiers of knowledge and to play to its strengths in addressing societal challenges.

### 3) Stimulate innovation and promote excellent environments

- Europe must ensure that it is creating the best environment for innovation to flourish.
- Instrument structures and rules relating to key innovation aspects such as Intellectual Property Rights must be non-prescriptive.
- Barriers must be removed so that researchers and entrepreneurs can bring ideas to market. In order for the very best people to participate in innovative research, instruments must be fairly structured so that rules for engagement do not favour specific sectors of society.
- Additional instruments need to be designed and implemented to bridge gaps in the innovation cycle.
- A balance will have to be found for the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) between much needed flexibility and freedom on the one hand and its alignment within a common framework on the other hand. We expect the Commission to draw on the lessons learnt from establishing the first Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) and from the forthcoming external evaluation of the EIT.
- There must be more proof of concept type funding that facilitates and enables the very best researchers to sustainably explore commercial and innovative activity.

### 4) Distinguish between funding research excellence and capacity building

- A truly world class research and innovation programme must focus on excellence.
- The goals of capacity building must be clearly defined as an independent objective not embedded in a research and innovation framework underpinned by excellence.
- Targeted incentives and mechanisms must be developed to ensure that cohesion policy funds are more readily available for and compatible with research and innovation policies.

### 5) Develop simple instruments that incentivise and bring real European added value

- There must be a clear step-change towards true simplification.
- Funding to carry out research and innovation must be sustainable.
- The rules that underpin and govern European research and innovation funding must be transparent and consistent.
- Avoid a radical shift towards output-based funding.
- Whilst it may make sense from a policy perspective to bring together funding instruments and agencies together, it is essential that such a move does not produce a framework that is inaccessible and overly complex.

<sup>1</sup> From Challenges to Opportunities: Towards a Common Strategic Framework for Research and Innovation Funding. European Commission. COM (2011) 48. Consultation website: [http://ec.europa.eu/research/csfr/index\\_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/research/csfr/index_en.cfm)