

Horizon 2020 for a more sustainable and fairer knowledge society: What role for citizens, civil society and public goods?

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Questions to MEPs

All questions below refer to priorities for Horizon 2020.

1. CSOs and Citizens' Participation in Research

Continue the science – society activities of the former framework programmes

The EU support to developing partnerships between academics, scientists and civil society organisation (CSOs) in research and capacity building (co-construction of knowledge, co-setting of research agendas, etc.) through its "Science in Society" (FP7) and "Science and Society" (FP6) activities has been crucial, both in practical and symbolic terms. This work should be valorised and strengthened under Horizon 2020. According to its preamble, "Horizon 2020 should favour an informed engagement of citizens and civil society.... by developing **responsible research and innovation** agendas that meet citizens' and civil society's concerns and expectations and by facilitating their participation in Horizon 2020 activities", but the means remain unclear.

- **Do you support a "science for and with society" programme with a significant budget in Horizon 2020?**
- **In FP7 projects industry and big companies often have a say, whereas citizens and CSOs often have less or not. Do you agree that in H2020 the influence of industry needs to be counterbalanced by the inclusion of CSOs and other actors in H2020 projects and agenda setting?**
- **For including CSOs, do you support their involvement in the setting of agendas in all thematic priorities (e.g. health, agriculture, energy, transport, environment)? Would you support that the annual work programmes of the thematic priorities should gradually open up 10% of their budget to participatory research projects?**
- **Do you favour opening up Marie-Curie-like-actions to the professional mobility of researchers to placements with CSOs?**

2. What Innovations?

Support innovation open to alternative pathways, new actors and the public interest

The EU has put innovation at the heart of its policies to solve societal problems. To date however, the focus has often been limited to high-tech innovation, "forgetting" thereby, that each problem has many aspects each asking for a different approach, and neglecting the complexity of problems and the diversity of possible solutions, be they high-tech, low tech or no-tech. These solutions all have different impacts on society and environment, which should profoundly be assessed before embarking on a pathway of innovation. Solving problems is clearly more than a matter of technology. For instance, genetically modified plants as response to pest attacks or drought is a class example of an expensive technology that distracts attention from cheaper, but nevertheless smart practices, such as crop rotation or soil management. There are hence grounded concerns about the benefits to society of current innovation and technological development

- **How should Horizon 2020 implement its commitment to ‘responsible research and innovation agendas’?**
- **How do you define responsible innovation responding to social, ecological and economic demands?**
- **Do you support to base all three strategic parts of the Specific Programme of Horizon 2020 (Industrial leadership, Scientific excellence, Societal challenges) on an inclusive concept of innovation and knowledge partnerships?**
- **For instance: How will Horizon 2020 structure the systematic inclusion of practitioners such as farmers and end-users? In particular, why does the Horizon 2020 proposal largely ignore the innovative contributions from farmers in reducing dependence on external inputs and likewise the crucial role of short food-supply chains in remunerating such methods?**

3. Resource Efficiency

Reconsider the relation between resource scarcity, resource efficiency and resource conservation

The rise of resource prices and increasing global demand has brought resource scarcity to the forefront of political agendas. In EU policy and research agendas, the main solution to resource scarcity lies in resource efficiency, especially through eco-innovation: but for what purpose? with what priorities for what resource usage? The Horizon 2020 proposal needs to reconsider the relation between resource scarcity, resource efficiency and resource conservation.

- **How should H2020 pursue its commitment to “an absolute decoupling of economic growth from resource use” (citation Horizon2020)?**
- **Do you support a research focus on structural changes – not only in production, but also in consumption systems? Do you agree that research and innovation should not only aim at ‘novel business models’ but also at more sustainable lifestyles lowering demands on resources?**
- **Do you support research on and for agro-ecological methods (e.g. ecological intensification, as in FP7)?**
- **How should Horizon 2020 link resource efficiency with resource conservation, e.g. by anticipating and avoiding rebound effects? Do you agree that Horizon 2020 proposals should promote resource conservation rather than resource efficiency?**
- **Even if biomass conversion becomes more efficient than at present, e.g. to produce energy, then how is this an optimal sustainable use of primary agricultural production? Do you agree that bio-refineries will not necessarily reduce pressure on natural resources?**
- **In Horizon 2020 are research priorities conflating nutritional needs with the commercial interests of input suppliers and meat suppliers? Why should Europe increase food production – rather than enhance food quality using locally available inputs? What research is needed to identify and enhance the most resource-efficient types of food production in Europe?**
- **Do you agree that the Horizon 2020 proposals should put more emphasis on a comprehensive systems approach towards zero-waste?**

4. Sustainable Development

Reconsider the relation between social choice, transition and what is sustainable

Many activities foreseen in H2020 relate to sustainable development, e.g. in agriculture, energy, transport, climate, and resource use. Though attention for sustainability obviously is a good thing,

nowadays almost any research activity can be (and is) labelled as “contributing to sustainable development”. Characterising sustainability is a problem of social choice – deciding what kind of society we want to create and live in. There are different visions of what “achieving a transition towards sustainable development” means. These diverging views inevitably create tensions between environmental protection, social cohesion, equity, and economic prosperity. Not only inter-generational tensions occur, but also intra-generational, i.e North-South making it difficult to address problems in an integrated way. These tensions are reflected in research agendas, which are mostly shaped by aims of economic competitiveness, corporate interests, and capital-intensive technological approaches.

- **How should research agendas - throughout all parts of H2020 - distinguish between sustainable and unsustainable development? How to evaluate such distinction?**
- **In the many activities aimed at tackling the Societal Challenges: How can high-tech claims be balanced against low-tech or other alternatives, in order to select those research proposals that make a real difference in achieving a sustainable development?**
- **How should research agendas take into account the multiple dimensions involved in sustainable development?**
- **How to ensure that research for sustainable development also brings about sustainable development on the local scale, in both North and South?**
- **How should decision processes about research priorities and the research itself deal with all the above issues? With whose expertise and involvement?**

5. Equitable licensing and open access policies

Support greater access to knowledge generated by EU financed research

Horizon 2020’s rules of participation should include principles to ensure that knowledge generated by EU financed research does not only lead to returns for private actors but also add to the EU public good. An ever-increasing number of voices in both academic and scientific communities are convinced that innovations from publicly funded research should be made more publicly accessible. The EU’s 2020 flagship Innovation Union proposal also recognises that innovation can be enhanced via knowledge sharing and speaks of introducing a more ‘open approach to innovation’ and ‘increased open access to the results of EU financed research’. The EU’s research and innovation funding under Horizon 2020 should reflect these important principles and guidelines in its Rules of Participation (COM(2011)810 final). This is especially true in areas where a predominant and overriding societal interest in ensuring needs-driven R&D and (affordable) access exists, for example in the field of biomedical research and food production.

- **What legal obligations will H2020 adopt in its Rules of Participation to ensure mandatory Open Access publishing of results of research financed by the EU?**
- **Should H2020 go one step further, beyond Open Access publishing? Currently, Open Access publishing passively makes available all articles. With an obliged summary in ordinary language for every published paper and an easy to use search engine, RSS feeds, etc, Open Access would open up scientific information more active and broadly accessible.**
- **How will H2020’s Rules of Participation encourage researchers to collaborate and share all knowledge - including unpublished data - generated with EU funding?**
- **Should H2020’s Rules of Participation reserve room for including socially responsible licensing conditions that are aimed at opening up publicly funded research results, for further research and to meet unmet market needs in case of overriding societal demands? Do you support socially responsible licensing and ethical technology transfer rules, e.g. following the example of other research organizations and universities in the EU and the US?**

6. Governance and conflicts of interest

Towards new inclusive, democratic and accountable processes

The Europe 2020 Strategy and the Innovation Union Flagship Initiative address Research and Innovation almost exclusively from the perspective of competitiveness. It envisages a society driven by technological ‘fixes’ instead of social-policy based solutions and threatens to impose an unacceptable corporate bias in Horizon 2020.

Ties between public scientists and private companies, who have their own particular needs and visions for research, already increasingly damage science’s integrity. This comes in large parts from the insistence of the EU and Member States on public-private partnerships in research. An EU agency like the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) already claims that this kind of research policy makes finding experts without conflicts of interests with industry difficult, thus creating a crucial problem for public risk assessment and more generally for knowledge progress.

The Commission's research policy is largely influenced, year after year, by research PPPs such as European Technology Platforms and Joint Technology Initiatives, whose members are able to have their own research and development projects funded with tax-payer's money thanks to these indirect and direct influence channels.

R&I processes should be shaped and regulated through inclusive, democratic and accountable processes encompassing the directions of progress (e.g. orientation of research, what innovation in which domains), changes in policy practices (decision making processes), and the recognition of divers actors (social movements, associations, users, CSOs, etc.).

- **How should the Horizon 2020 proposal defend the quality and integrity of public science and expertise?**
- **Are you planning to amend the Commission's proposal on public-private partnerships, and if so which steps are you intending to take in order to prevent big business from capturing EU's research policy and funding? How can H2020 rule out that few networks dominate thematic fields and monopolize topics, while narrowing down the flow of ideas to their own perspectives?**
- **What do you think of the proposed governance scheme for the “Industrial Leadership” priority, explicitly reserved for activities chosen by business including high-risk and controversial ones such as synthetic biology? Will you make sure that there is public funding dedicated to lead independent research for risk assessment of these technologies?**
- **Will you make sure that the EU's research policy includes a robust regulation of conflicts of interests and safeguards of public expertise, also for the EU's agencies (EFSA, EMA, ECHA, EEA etc.)? Will you for instance revise EFSA's founding regulation and budget so that it has the means to do its work properly and stop using industry experts and science for its risk assessments?**
- **What incentives will you provide to open up innovation processes to the active implication of citizens and civil society organisations (e.g. farmers in agricultural research), rather than being them passive recipients of communication campaigns, and what regulations can you foresee for these innovation processes to become inclusive, democratic and accountable?**
- **Ethical concerns about many of the controversial technologies the EU is already funding have also been sidelined; what kind of overhaul of the EU's science ethics regulation do you want to promote?**