

Last chance to safeguard citizen's protections by removing "Innovation Principle" from Horizon Europe

11 March 2019 - Civil society is calling for the immediate and complete removal of the "innovation principle" from Horizon Europe, the next EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, because it threatens the Precautionary Principle and is nothing more than an attempt to keep regulation of dangerous products at bay.

The inclusion of this so-called principle in Horizon Europe (*see timeline below*) marks a red line for civil society, given its far-reaching implications and the threat it poses to human health, the environment and true sustainability. Ahead of the final meeting between the EU institutions to agree the legislative package for Horizon Europe, **we strongly urge the Council of the European Union and the European Parliament to act now and delete all references to this dangerous tool.**

Civil society does not support the innovation principle because:

- **It has no legal basis.** The innovation principle has not been defined in international law or in EU treaties or EU Court of Justice law.
- **It is incompatible with the EU's Precautionary Principle,** which is enshrined in the EU treaties and allows regulators, reflecting society's chosen level of protection, to take action without the need to wait for absolute scientific certainty on the risks of new products. For example, reports [have shown](#) it could have prevented serious harm from asbestos. While it is claimed the two principles are compatible, industry proponents of the innovation principle have previously made clear [they do not support](#) the Precautionary Principle.
- **It is an industry-created tool to undermine key policies and regulations protecting human health and the environment.** This principle was [created](#) by the European Risk Forum (ERF), a platform representing chemicals, tobacco and fossil fuels industries, among others, to undermine EU regulations [including](#) on chemicals, pesticides, biotechnology and pharmaceuticals. For example, its supporters in industry have [urged](#) that it should be used to weaken the REACH regulation which is intended to regulate dangerous chemicals. Similarly, there have been [calls](#) for it to be used to prevent the ban of potent neonicotinoid pesticides, which were banned by EU Member States in May 2018 for their disastrous impact on pollinators' health.
- **It creates additional measures intended to delay key regulations.** The innovation principle would handcuff public decision-makers and prevent them from regulating potentially dangerous products by forcing all new regulation to undergo costly extra impact assessments before being proposed to EU legislators.
- **It is unnecessary as a tool to support innovation for society's benefit.** A main claim by supporters of the innovation principle is that it is needed to spur innovation for sustainability. However, this conveniently ignores that not all innovation is good innovation. For innovation to work for the public good, it must not harm people or the planet. It is the role of regulators to guide innovation in the right direction for the good of society.
- **In fact, it has been shown that regulation spurs innovation.** It has helped to bring [new, safer chemicals](#) to market and encouraged innovations that shifted away from ozone depleting substances. Furthermore, it is not always the case that new technologies and products are the right solutions for ensure a sustainable future, better policies and regulations play an important role too.

The inclusion of this 'principle' in Horizon Europe would set an extremely dangerous precedent for regulation and policy making in the EU. **We urge the Council and Parliament to recognise these risks and remove this unacceptable tool.**

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34. Kom op tegen Kanker (Stand up to Cancer), Belgium
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40. EKPIZO-Consumer Association the Quality of Life, Greece
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61. TRT-5
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63. ARAS - Romanian Association Against AIDS
64. Comitato Veneto Sensibilità Chimica Multipla
65. Associazione Viviamo Vitinia ONLUS
66. Associazione Medici per l'Ambiente - ISDE Italia
67. AIDS Action Europe
68. Compassion in World Farming

Background information/notes to editors:

- **In June 2018**, the European Commission released its proposal for Horizon Europe, the next EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation. Both legal texts, the [Regulation](#) and the [Specific Programme](#), included references to the application of the innovation principle within and beyond Horizon Europe.
- **In December 2018**: the European Parliament approved its position on the [Regulation](#) and [Specific Programme](#), which retained the references to the innovation principle despite a significant number of MEPs voting for their removal.
- **In November 2018**: the Council of the European Union agreed its partial position on the [Regulation](#). This position did not include the section of the legislation (the recitals), which refers to the innovation principle. As of writing we understand the innovation principle is still in the recitals.
- **In January 2019**, trilogue negotiations between Council and Parliament on the Regulation formally began. The Specific Programme is not part of the trilogue and is anticipated to be agreed only by Council with no formal say of the Parliament.
- **On 14 March 2019 [TBC]**, it is anticipated the Council and European Parliament will close trilogue negotiations on Horizon Europe.
- **On 15-18 April 2019 [TBC]**, it is anticipated that the agreement on Horizon Europe will be sent to final plenary of the European Parliament for a vote.