

The Stockholm Region Association for European Affairs – Second Position paper on the next European framework programme for research and innovation (FP10)

May 2024

Position

The summarised position is that the Stockholm Region Association for European Affairs believes that the role of regions and municipalities should be made more visible and clarified in the next framework programme in order to increase the participation of public actors and ensure that regional and local needs and challenges continue to be included in the next framework programme. This means the following:

The regional and local dimension of the framework programme

The Stockholm Region Association for European Affairs stresses that strengthening the regional and local dimension of the framework programme does not necessarily mean that more calls and funds should be targeted at regions and municipalities, but rather that their role should be developed and clarified within the framework of current initiatives.

Public actors have an important role to play not only as recipients of research results, but also as participants in projects to provide a stronger link to societal application and bridge the gap between research and practice. By prioritising the mobilisation and activation of public actors, as recipients of project funding and as testbeds for research and innovation, the next EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation can create real and lasting impact by increasing society's uptake of new solutions and practices. The Stockholm Region Association for European Affairs therefore calls for an increase in calls for applied research based on the needs of regions and municipalities.

- The Stockholm Region Association for European Affairs emphasises the importance of the European Commission allocating part of the FP10 budget to initiatives that combine applied research with a strong link to local challenges.
- When regions and municipalities make data and test environments available for research and innovation, the Stockholm Region Association for European Affairs believes that it should be made clear in FP10's framework and calls that the results should be linked to local, urban challenges. The Stockholm Region Association for European Affairs believes that more funds should be allocated to calls focusing on structural innovation work, i.e. where applied research can help to answer how regions and municipalities should organise themselves and integrate new methods and technologies to meet regional and local needs, changes and challenges that can help to solve global societal challenges.

Synergies between research, innovation and sustainable regional and local development

The Stockholm Region Association for European Affairs welcomes synergies between different EU policy areas and funding instruments. Investments in research and innovation are necessary to contribute to an effective digital, green and social transition for the whole of the EU. The funding makes it possible to test, develop, implement, and validate solutions, technologies and methods that do not fit into ordinary activities, which contributes to both growth and competitiveness. The Stockholm Region Association for European Affairs stresses the need to strengthen dialogue between national managing authorities with administrative responsibility for various EU funds and the European Commission, in order to create more conditions for effective and efficient synergies and promote optimised use and interaction of EU funds.

- The Stockholm Region Association for European Affairs emphasises that it is important to maintain the current focus on innovation in Horizon Europe, as well as to maintain FP10's contribution to addressing global societal challenges through innovation.
- The Stockholm Region Association for European Affairs underlines that the work of regions and municipalities for long-term sustainable regional and local development benefits from strong collaboration with academia. However, in order for the synergies between research and innovation to reach their full potential, it is important that the results can be implemented in public activities. A prerequisite for this is that calls for proposals are formulated in a way that ensures that the researcher's approach is in synergy with the needs of the public sector.
- The Stockholm Region Association for European Affairs encourages the national managing authorities of EU funds to engage in a close dialogue with the European Commission in the design of FP10, to ensure appropriate synergies between FP10 and other funding instruments. While the funding model of Horizon Europe is very beneficial for academic participants, there are other EU funds and programmes where the high level of co-financing makes it difficult to achieve co-creation between academia and the public sector. The Stockholm Region Association for European Affairs stresses the importance of reviewing how it would be possible to increase academia's participation in other EU funds such as ERDF, and create appropriate synergies between different EU funding instruments, by reviewing the funding model and incentives in other EU programmes.
- At present, different Member States may make different interpretations and assessments of the EU regulatory framework for financial instruments. The Stockholm Region Association for European Affairs emphasises the importance of clarity in the current regulatory framework and information about opportunities within this framework, in order to create the best use of EU funds based on the needs of the Member State. This may, for example, concern opportunities for allocation and co-financing between different funds.

EU Missions

The Stockholm Region Association for European Affairs believes that the European Commission would have benefited from formulating the local and regional missions' initiatives in closer dialogue with the regions and municipalities. The Stockholm Region European Association urges the European Commission to engage in a more continuous dialogue and cooperation with the regions and municipalities for similar initiatives in the future.

- The Stockholm Region Association for European Affairs emphasises the importance of involving regions and municipalities in formal consultations and in advisory groups at both EU and national level in the development of initiatives where regions and municipalities are expected to be the driving force in the projects.
- The Stockholm Region Association for European Affairs encourages a further development of Missions within FP10 but emphasises the importance of establishing new funding opportunities and instruments for the regions and municipalities participating in the Missions designed by the Commission.

Design of calls and proposals

Many of the Horizon Europe's calls are aimed at regions and municipalities and are highly attractive to actors in the Stockholm region.

- The Stockholm Region Association for European Affairs is in favour of Coordination and Support Actions (CSA)¹ and would prefer more CSA actions in the next Framework Programme.
- The Stockholm Region Association for European Affairs believes that the requirement to define the end result in the project application should be removed, as it limits the possibility of achieving the best effect and innovation if the result is defined in advance. However, it should still be clear in the project application what problem needs to be solved to lead to change or improvement.
- The Stockholm Region Association for European Affairs welcomes a low level of co-financing in the framework programme, in calls where regions and municipalities are a natural partner.

Better communication for reuse and scale up of completed projects

The EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation is large and complex in its structure, which can present a challenge in terms of disseminating information locally about the opportunities available in the programme. The Stockholm Region Association for European Affairs welcomes an earlier and closer dialogue with the national level and the European Commission before the establishment of the new FP10.

- The Stockholm Region Association for European Affairs calls on the European Commission to review the model for disseminating results from completed projects. This could be done, for example, via digital tools, where European actors can easily search for project results in relevant areas. The Stockholm Region Association for European Affairs believes that there is added value that is not currently being utilised.
- The Stockholm Region Association for European Affairs calls on the European Commission to develop the digital platform² currently used for information on ongoing projects. The Stockholm Region Association for European Affairs underlines that better availability of completed and successful projects will increase the range of applicability for several actors and possibility to develop new projects.

Harmonisation between legislation and the Framework Programme

Research and innovation are driving the need for new and developed EU legislation. The Stockholm Region Association for European Affairs believes that the Framework Programme and EU legislation need to be more clearly harmonised to enable the implementation of these structural changes.

- The Stockholm Region Association for European Affairs believes that the EU should clarify and communicate the link between EU legislation and its funding options.

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/other/wp/2018-2020/annexes/h2020-wp1820-annex-d-csa_en.pdf

² (CORDIS)

