

# DIGITALEUROPE views on the EU R&I Strategic Plan: Future of Partnerships and Missions

*Brussels, 19 February 2019*

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## KEY MESSAGES

### GENERAL VIEWS

- The Strategic Plan implementing Horizon Europe must be the result of a transparent process with stakeholder consultation and dialogue during all its phases.
- The industry must be involved in the design of public-private partnerships through a structured dialogue, consulted on missions, and represented in boards and other governance bodies or forums.
- Technological neutrality must be ensured: missions and partnerships should focus on objectives and goals rather than favouring specific technologies.

### ON PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

- The Strategic Plan should carefully assess which type of partnership is relevant for the objectives set by public sector and industry.
- Capping the partnerships' budget would endanger the whole partnership landscape without simplifying it.
- Clear contractual rules for each partnership for the extent of Horizon Europe would ensure legal certainty for private and public partners and ensure long-term planning.
- Phasing-out rules must be flexible. Successful partnerships must be able to continue their activities in the Framework Programme following Horizon Europe.
- Early termination of partnerships must be based on clear reasons, with prior consultation of the beneficiaries and without prejudice on private funding and ongoing projects.

### ON MISSIONS

- Only a few missions should be launched as a pilot, with limited budget. Only after positive evaluation should additional missions be implemented.

## INTRODUCTION

In June 2018, the European Commission released legislative proposals for the Horizon Europe Framework programme for Research & Innovation and for the Digital Europe programme. The implementation of both programmes will be heavily influenced by the process of 'Strategic Planning' to be launched by the Commission in 2019. The Strategic Plan should for instance outline the priorities of the first work programme, translate mission areas into missions, specify institutional partnership areas, define contractual public-private partnerships (cPPPs or *co-programmed partnerships*) and oversee the drafting of impact assessments and legislation for institutional partnerships (Joint Undertakings/Joint Technology Initiatives).

With this document, DIGITALEUROPE sets proposals and contributes to the discussions surrounding the Strategic Plan. Many of our Members participate in public-private European partnerships under Horizon 2020 and believe that partnerships and missions will play a key role in the implementation of Horizon Europe.

## GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS AND COMMENTS

### 1. Scope

The Strategic Plan is set to draft the main orientations of the first work programme, which will give details on how the different pillars of the research programme will be implemented. This process is of great importance for the industry as it will shape major parts of Horizon Europe.

Industry stands for two-thirds of R&D investment in Europe. However, the private sector participation in the last two framework programmes has remained rather low (between 25 and 30%<sup>1</sup>) compared to its general contribution to innovation. **Industrial participation is essential to bring research results to the benefits of citizens** and applied, industry-focussed research is essential for Europe's sustainable competitiveness. In terms of funding, the industry will also be a key contributor to the success of the research programme. It is therefore crucial to ensure the involvement of private companies in the early phases of the programming, as this will be a major incentive to increase their participation in Horizon Europe. Safeguarding 'impact' and 'excellence' as the main evaluation criteria in the work programmes will also help creating a welcoming environment for the industry.

DIGITALEUROPE, as main representative of the digital industry, is particularly interested in pillars 2 and 3 ('Global Challenges and Industrial Competitiveness' and 'Innovative Europe'<sup>2</sup>). As industrial competitiveness is at the core of pillar 2, we believe that arbitrations on themes, instruments and timeline need to consider the views of industry stakeholders. **The industry is the most knowledgeable actor on the topics addressed by pillar 2 and shall be directly involved in the related decision-making processes.** This is particularly the case for the design of public-private partnerships, and to some extent, missions. Objective-driven innovation through partnerships and missions should be based on strong technological knowledge, that the industry possesses. To strengthen technological expertise, we believe that the work programmes should support continued research on Key Enabling Technologies (KETs).

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<sup>1</sup> European Commission, Private Sector Participation (funding), [DG RTD Annual Monitoring Reports](#)

<sup>2</sup> 'Innovative Europe' is the proposal from both Council and European Parliament. The Commission proposed the name 'Open Innovation'.

Regarding pillar 3, the digital industry is greatly interested in the potential of the European Innovation Council (EIC) and proposes to advise Commission and Member States on this new instrument. To achieve the EIC's potential of combining novel technologies and business models, DIGITALEUROPE believes that the instrument should be open to all sizes of industry and further encourage the collaboration between large and smaller businesses as innovation partners.

The Strategic Plan will be based on the decision establishing the Specific Programme and its related implementing acts, which means that its scope is legally restricted to Horizon Europe. However, **we encourage the EU institutions to take a comprehensive view to prepare a plan that will also consider other closely linked programmes and funds**, notably the Connecting Europe Facility and the Digital Europe programme. Clear synergies and a holistic implementation plan are essential for the Digital Europe programme, as three of its objectives, high-performance computing, artificial intelligence and cybersecurity, will to a large extent be achieved thanks to calls released through Horizon Europe public-private partnerships. Therefore, to create a coherent research and innovation ecosystem, synergies between innovation-supporting programmes should be sought directly within the Strategic Plan.

## 2. Industry involvement

The Strategic Planning process and discussions on partnerships and missions should involve the industry as much as possible. The private sector has always been a key contributor to research and innovation consortiums under the framework programmes, providing R&I partners from the whole value chain with its knowledge, networks and resources (access to market and to industry networks, business expertise, research infrastructures, targeted technical resources, etc.). The industry's involvement in co-designing the public-private partnerships and the definition of their objectives has greatly contributed to the success of these structures under Horizon 2020 and the previous programmes. The 2017 interim evaluation of Horizon 2020's Joint Undertakings showed for instance that these public-private partnerships contribute to the reinforcement of the Union's global competitiveness and help overcoming the fragmentation of research activities in highly competitive sectors<sup>3</sup>.

For Horizon Europe, DIGITALEUROPE believes that **the industry should be heavily involved in the definition and design of the next generation of public-private partnerships**, as their objective is to improve Europe's long-term competitiveness with smart targeted investments and at the same time address societal challenges. Industry expertise and experience from the current public-private partnerships should be used during and after the Strategic Planning process, through a structured dialogue between EU institutions and stakeholders. Specific attention should be given to industry associations which have participated in and supported the Horizon 2020 partnerships. New partnerships, whether they are co-programmed or institutional, should allow for significant industry engagement, particularly through industry associations and partnership governing boards. The industry should be involved in the design of the missions and should have a place within the mission boards.

## 3. Transparency

Public-private partnerships are a key instrument of the Framework programmes to boost European innovation and competitiveness. As missions are cross research areas and involving partnerships, they will

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<sup>3</sup> European Commission, Interim evaluation of the Joint Undertakings operating under Horizon 2020, October 2017, [http://ec.europa.eu/research/evaluations/pdf/20171009\\_a187\\_swd.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/research/evaluations/pdf/20171009_a187_swd.pdf)

play a key role in the success of Horizon Europe. Therefore, it is crucial to ensure that partnerships and missions will be defined and implemented in the most transparent manner, with all parties involved, stakeholders included.

The Strategic Planning process, to be held by the Commission, will be the main tool used to outline the partnership and mission landscape. **The Strategic Plan’s operating timeline and the details of its governance and functioning must be communicated before its start.** The Plan should include the involvement and consultation of all stakeholders at every stage of its process of defining partnerships and missions. Stakeholder input must be duly taken into account, to ensure that Horizon Europe can benefit from the experience acquired by research and innovation partners under the previous framework programmes.

#### 4. Technological neutrality

Like its predecessors, **Horizon Europe should not prescribe specific technologies to be favoured over others.** If a technology is considered relevant by the research and innovation community to achieve the objectives of Horizon Europe and its work programmes, then there should be the possibility to participate in research and innovation activities on such technology. Consequently, partnerships and missions should not advocate one single technology as this would create ‘technological silos’ that may prevent research to be carried on other promising technologies. We believe that missions and partnerships should focus on objectives and goals rather than specific technologies.

DIGITALEUROPE proposes to also consider market relevance to ensure that a specific technology is given an adequate place within Horizon Europe, particularly when it comes to activities carried out under the pillar 2 on global challenges and industrial competitiveness. Market relevance and forecast capability for industrial application of a technology should be considered when selecting proposals under pillar 2. In many cases, a technology that would not be broadly supported by the industry may not be developed far enough, which would lead to only few public and private actors ultimately using the technology.

## RECOMMENDATIONS ON PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

#### 5. Type and structure

DIGITALEUROPE members have been participating in several types of public-private partnerships under the previous framework programmes, to address the competitiveness challenges that the industry is facing in Europe. With Horizon 2020, the industry has been active and engaged in Contractual Public-Private Partnerships (cPPPs) and Joint Undertakings/Joint Technology Initiatives (JUs/JTIs). We acknowledge that both types of partnerships have their benefits and drawbacks. For this reason, we advise the Commission to assess carefully which type of partnership would fit the given objectives and the expected output of a future partnership – also considering the cluster or the intervention areas’ specificities.

**The Strategic Plan should therefore carry out transparent impact assessments based on objective evaluation criteria** and use Horizon 2020’s well-functioning partnerships, of all sorts, as benchmarks for deciding the structure of the new or updated partnerships. Selection criteria and parameters must be consensual, supported by all stakeholders. The industry should be an active participant in these discussions through a structured dialogue between EU institutions and stakeholders, leading to *de facto* co-decision.

Ultimately, **no types of partnerships should be favoured over others**. For instance, public-public partnerships should not be given precedence over public-private ones as their rationale and objectives are totally different and cannot be compared. Regarding public-private partnerships, the same principle should apply for institutional and co-programmed partnerships.

Whatever the type of public-private partnerships, **industry participants must be involved in the governance system**. Industry partners are expected, for both co-programmed and institutional partnerships, to be contributing to the pool of resources available, for instance through financial or in-kind contributions. Thus, it is only fair that industry partners would be involved in the decision-making process on the administration and management of a partnership they support.

## 6. Capping

DIGITALEUROPE supports the review and the rationalisation of the partnership landscape for Horizon Europe. However, we believe that streamlining the partnerships should be done in a coherent way through the Strategic Planning process, following transparent impact assessments and inclusive consultations as well as exchanges with stakeholders. Setting overall limits of maximum funding allocated to partnerships, also known as ‘capping’, puts at risk the entire partnership landscape.

**Capping could artificially reduce the number of partnerships or their respective budgets without necessarily rationalising the whole partnership environment**. Merging existing partnerships when relevant, through an open and transparent process, is a much better solution than setting an arbitrary limit that would oblige to either terminate several partnerships or cut down their funding.

## 7. Duration

With Horizon Europe, there is a strong political will to set conditions for phasing-out partnerships. While DIGITALEUROPE agrees that no partnership should be granted a guaranteed functioning for decades, we believe that **Horizon Europe partnerships should not be selected during the Strategic Plan on the basis that they would be completed by 2027 or would not require further EU support after this date**. Long-term commitments are necessary because research and innovation is a process that may take time to achieve impact.

Depending on the partnership, it may be very relevant to continue the work done in Horizon Europe under the next framework programme. This can be the case if not all the objectives of a partnership have been reached – but could be following the extension – or if new goals have been identified and fit the partnership’s framework. DIGITALEUROPE cautions that setting too strict rules regarding the termination of partnerships could lead to well-working and successful research activities being abandoned at the end of the Programme – or even before. **Flexibility is needed regarding phasing-out rules**, to ensure that a partnership will be active for at least the whole duration of Horizon Europe and potentially continued under the next framework programme if needed.

**Any early termination of a partnership, whenever necessary, should be based on clear and motivated reasons**. Such phasing-out process should not be started without prior consultation of the beneficiaries. Additionally, the termination of a partnership should not have any impact on private funding and should not threaten the continuation of ongoing projects.

## 8. Work programmes and long-term planning

Current discussions on the framework of Horizon Europe show that partnerships would not be set for the whole Programme but only for the duration of its work programmes. This means that there would be no clear guarantees on the commitment of the European Union and other parties to a given partnership for more than two years. The lack of assurance that partnerships will get the necessary support and resources throughout the whole Programme may prevent industry partners from joining.

The longevity of partnerships must be ensured through contracts running at least the whole length of Horizon Europe. This should be the case for all partnerships, whether they are institutional (e.g. joint undertakings) or co-programmed (e.g. contractual public-private partnerships). **Clear contractual rules for each partnership for the extent of Horizon Europe would ensure legal certainty.** This would also support long-term research planning within partnerships and encourage public and private research entities to participate in the Programme.

## 9. Participation and dissemination

DIGITALEUROPE believes that partnerships are excellent instruments that should benefit to the whole research and innovation community. **Partnerships should be open to all stakeholders willing to contribute.** Calls for proposals within a partnership should continue to be open to all R&I participants, granting them free and full access. Partnerships should continue to involve stakeholders outside of the partnerships when relevant and possible.

As for general direct calls, DIGITALEUROPE supports a practical and industry-friendly implementation of open access policies for partnership calls. Open access rules should not jeopardise the legitimate interests of competitiveness and confidentiality constraints of industrial stakeholders. While DIGITALEUROPE's Members support open access to scientific publications, they believe that **research partners should have the freedom to decide if they want to give access to research data.** Depending on the case, public and private research consortiums members should be able to decide on a voluntary and case-by-case basis whether access can be granted, and if so, to which data and to whom, according to the principle of access to research data being **"as open as possible, as closed as necessary"**.

The above principle is fundamental as research data may contain sensitive competitive information which, if released, could undermine years of investments in innovation and reduce the competitiveness of companies. This approach respects the essential protection of intellectual property, security, confidential information and personal data as well as legitimate commercial interests. Therefore, decisions on exploitation modalities, including transfer to third parties, should be made upon agreement with the beneficiaries, in line with their Dissemination and Exploitation Plan, during the action.

## RECOMMENDATIONS ON MISSIONS

### 10. Industry participation

The main objective of the Horizon Europe missions is to focus research efforts from different fields and areas of expertise to tackle and solve global problems. These "moonshot" initiatives will be partially based on regular direct calls and partnership calls fitting the missions' objectives. As representative of thousands of

SMEs and larger companies, DIGITALEUROPE expresses its members' commitment to tackle global challenges. Given the larger-scale nature of the missions and the fact that they will require expertise from both public and private sectors, especially if partnerships are involved, we believe that **all stakeholders should be involved and consulted on the design and the management of missions.**

In order to succeed in tackling the many challenges Europe is facing, it is critical to make sure that not only public institutions will take part in mission-related research projects. Since missions will be located in and earmarked to pillar 2 on industrial competitiveness and global challenges, they should be designed in such a way that they benefit from the industry's knowledge and capacities. Once mission areas have been chosen, it is also important to **ensure that the industry is represented in the mission boards** to make sure that the industry's research and innovation potential will assist the public sector in achieving the missions' goals. Mission managers should be selected according to the professional competencies required for their mission area and should preferably have an industrial background.

## 11. Assessment

DIGITALEUROPE welcomes the introduction of missions. However, as this is a new instrument, we propose to **first launch a mission pilot**. This pilot, established for the first years of implementation of Horizon Europe, should only include a few missions. After these first pilot years have been reviewed, when the necessary adjustments have been made, and following a positive outlook on the opportunity to continue using this instrument, new missions may be launched, and existing ones strengthened.

In all cases, we advise to **allocate only a small portion of the budget directly to missions** as they may be very specific and focussed: the budget of some clusters may be monopolised by missions and cluster areas which are not missions-related may be deprived of the resources of a cluster. We propose that no more than 10% of the annual budget of each cluster should be programmed through specific calls to implement the missions. This percentage can be increased following positive conclusions of the evaluation on the selection and management process of the missions.

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## ABOUT DIGITALEUROPE

DIGITALEUROPE represents the digital technology industry in Europe. Our members include some of the world's largest IT, telecoms and consumer electronics companies and national associations from every part of Europe. DIGITALEUROPE wants European businesses and citizens to benefit fully from digital technologies and for Europe to grow, attract and sustain the world's best digital technology companies. DIGITALEUROPE ensures industry participation in the development and implementation of EU policies.

DIGITALEUROPE's members include in total over 35,000 ICT Companies in Europe represented by 63 Corporate Members and 40 National Trade Associations from across Europe. Our website provides further information on our recent news and activities: <http://www.digitaleurope.org>

## DIGITALEUROPE MEMBERSHIP

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**Cyprus:** CITEA  
**Denmark:** DI Digital, IT-BRANCHEN  
**Estonia:** ITL  
**Finland:** TIF  
**France:** AFNUM, Syntec Numérique, Tech in France

**Germany:** BITKOM, ZVEI  
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