



Opinion on Missions – Mission-Oriented Research & Innovation in the European Union

Aarhus University welcomes the report “Mission-Oriented Research and Innovation in the European Union”. The idea about introducing mission-oriented research and innovation is exciting and implementation of a limited number of missions could make a significant contribution to the problem solving approach of the challenge pillar.

Aarhus University’s contribution will focus on four recommendations:

1. A central role of excellent research in missions – and in the Global Challenge pillar - is essential
2. In selecting missions and portfolio of projects, securing ownership of relevant stakeholders and involving civil society is crucial
3. Simplification should remain an overarching principle - both in the structuring and in the implementation of FP9
4. The selection of missions needs to be based on a portfolio management approach ensuring synergy and complementarity among projects and securing impact at mission level

1. A central role of excellent research in missions – and in the Global Challenge pillar - is essential

Aarhus University finds it important that missions build on Europe’s research excellence, and make long-term contributions to global challenges by providing more opportunities for collaborative research.

Aarhus University is pleased to see that “*missions will work to address problems using the entire research and innovation value chain from fundamental research to applied research and cutting-edge innovation*”.

In designing the Global Challenge pillar Aarhus University encourages a strong focus on excellent research, and calls for missions that require collaboration across disciplines and across leading research environments in Europe.





The strong focus on measurable impact and the announced related implications for how European public research and innovation funding is allocated and assessed must not compromise the strong focus on excellence in the Framework Programme as key to success. This focus must be maintained and excellence must continue to be the governing principle.

2. In selecting missions and portfolio of projects, securing ownership of relevant stakeholders and involving civil society is crucial

Aarhus University finds the five selection criteria proposed in the report appropriate and recommends that the FP9 regulation will define the criteria and concept of missions while the specific mission should be defined in Working Programmes in order to be flexible to select new or adjusting missions during the FP9 period.

Regarding the overall process of selecting the missions, Aarhus University considers it important to secure political and broader societal support for the missions by involving relevant stakeholders and civil society. Aarhus University recommends that missions are defined jointly by EC and relevant stakeholders. Public engagement in co-designing missions should be enabled.

Selecting the portfolio of projects to fulfill a specific mission will be just as important as selecting the missions. How to set up an appropriate cluster of projects concretely, still seems to need further specification as this will be the key to success. Questions concerning the sequentiality, interlinkages, and granularity of projects and researchers need to be carefully considered. Securing ownership is crucial also in this regard.

3. Simplification should remain an overarching principle - both in the structuring and in the implementation of FP9

The implementation in Horizon 2020 has been streamlined and made simpler. The next Framework Programme should be even more streamlined; the introduction of missions should not reverse this trend by complicating the implementation.

Aarhus University welcomes approaches to priority setting that emphasize the importance of project portfolios rather than individual projects. Still, caution should be taken in introducing additional management modes. Likewise, missions should not complicate the landscape of programmes and instruments further e.g. by introducing additional forms of partnerships. The final number of programmes and instruments should be reduced compared to Horizon 2020.

For Aarhus University it is important that the central role of research must be guaranteed in the projects funded by the missions through evaluation criteria that acknowledge research excellence as a key element for the evaluation and success of the projects.



A high degree of flexibility and adaptability is required to allow the possibility to change course. A consequence of introducing principles such as '*stage gate distribution of funding*' and '*redirecting funding*' to other activities if milestones are not achieved could be that researchers would hesitate from engaging in the missions.

4. The selection of missions needs to be based on a portfolio management approach ensuring synergy and complementarity among projects and securing impact at mission level

As in Horizon 2020, a focus on the impact of research funded by FP9 is clearly justified. Aarhus University supports a diverse notion of impact, which includes economic, social, environmental, and democratic impacts, but also scientific impacts.

It is important that the introduction of missions is used as an opportunity to start considering the diverse impacts of project portfolios rather than the impact of individual projects. The impact requirements related to individual projects in Horizon 2020 has in some cases led to over-selling, and evaluation of success has been challenged by the limited project duration.

Implementation of longer-term missions offers an opportunity for liberating individual projects from making unrealistic claims about impact, and for developing schemes for actual monitoring of impact at mission level. It is a precondition that decision making bodies at mission level develop a succinct strategy for achieving the mission and a corresponding logic for populating the portfolio of projects.

A mission approach should focus on securing longer-term continuity in the selected projects' focus and in the use of results, thus, ensuring consistency and complementarity of each new project of the portfolio in line with the particular Mission's high level objectives and defined pathways.