



Receiver(s): The European Commission

DRAFT: Position Paper - Consultation on the next EU's long-term budget (MFF)

Aarhus University welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the consultation on EU's next long-term budget (MFF) and the university warmly welcomes the European Commission's objective to put research and innovation at the heart of the European economy and endorse the ambitions of the Competitiveness Compass.

To nurture scientific excellence as an important part of the foundations of European competitiveness. Aarhus University supports **dedicated** funding for European research and innovation and strongly emphasizes the principle of excellence as a key principle. It needs to focus on funding science, research and innovation at the frontiers of knowledge to create research-based solutions and innovations for both current and future global challenges. A balanced programme which spurs research-based innovations across the entire TRL scale is crucial to fully utilise the discoveries at universities to the benefit of industry and society at large.

In line with the Danish position paper on FP10 Aarhus University supports an **ambitious** programme and is welcoming the motion from the Parliaments ITRE Committee on the assessment of the implementation of Horizon Europe suggesting a substantially higher budget.

Aarhus University calls for a **robust** budget for European research and innovation; it is important that it will be a **long-term** budget which is not subject to changing political priorities nor redirections without prior negotiations.

There is a need for a budget which will ensure mobilizing talented researchers and innovators in developing their **groundbreaking ideas** for the needs of Europe's economy and society. Aarhus University support strengthening the European Research Council and maintaining the independence of its Scientific Council. Aarhus University underlines the importance of recognizing the pivotal role of MSCA in this. It is crucial that ERC and MSCA will not become subject to political priorities.





Aarhus University supports an autonomous and strengthened EIC too and stresses the importance of especially the bottom-up open schemes across pathfinder, transition and accelerator. All parts of the R&I programme could benefit from EIC Transition by better utilising Proof of Concept as an instrument across the programme.

Having full regard to the importance of ERC, MSCA and EIC, Aarhus University would like to also stress the importance of excellent challenge-based collaborative research which today is funded in Horizon Europe pillar II across clusters, partnerships and missions. Regardless the exact design of such a structure, strategic collaborative research and innovation is of outmost importance as so many of this time's biggest challenges cannot be solved single handed by neither mono beneficiary projects nor a deep tech focus exclusively. Bringing stakeholders and industry together is key when translating research into innovation. Aarhus University sees a lot of value in strategic collaborative research and would urge that this continues on all TRL levels among others by integrating Open Innovation in Science platforms as a component in relevant EU Research Infrastructures and EU Partnerships.

For Aarhus University it is crucial that future funding includes opportunities to fund **excellent challenge-oriented collaborative research and innovation** projects along the whole pipeline from fundamental research to market-ready innovative solutions. Such EU R&I investments should build on existing and emerging strongholds including sciences related to agrifood, biodiversity, water, materials, health, SSAH, digitalisation and similar.

Tackling Europe's key challenges needs collaborative projects that can ensure long-term strategic impact based on cross-disciplinary, cross-sectoral and cross-continental collaboration that allows for knowledge transfer between universities and stakeholders, including policy, society and industry and may serve as a leverage for future discoveries and improve competitive positions.

Further, in the current tense geopolitical climate international collaboration must remain a key characteristic of EU's research and innovation policy.

To bolster innovation from European universities it is important to strengthen the innovation infrastructure at the universities. This involves building strong Tech/Knowledge transfer functions. A program like the "European Innovation Ecosystems" is instrumental in this, but it should be based on excellence and be large enough in program-size and project budgets to make a real impact at the European universities.

A significant factor of success will be **genuine simplification** in the access and administration of programmes and projects.



- Existing strategic programming process may be reconsidered. There is a potential for simplification by creating less prescriptive topics within collaborative projects
- It is important that further efforts are made for simplifying project implementation. Simplification should include simple and consistent reporting requires across topics in a given part of the programme. Once an action is launched changes in the conditions for participating, reporting and monitoring, documenting are kept to a minimum.
- Another potential of simplification is ensuring ease of access, transparent and uniform governance across the European Partnerships. Aarhus University recognize the value of partnerships and urge the Commission to prioritise these carefully both in numbers, governance and objectives.
- Aarhus University recognizes the importance of the Gender Equality Plans and the connected activities introduced until now. Aarhus University encourages the Commission to consolidate the experiences with its structure and activities and wait with introducing new objectives, indicators or monitoring requirements to fulfil or report on.