Methodological approach to the preparation of the first Horizon Europe Strategic Plan

Following the extensive co-design activities carried out in the second half of 2019, which culminated with the publication of the ‘Orientations towards the first Strategic Plan for Horizon Europe’ (‘Orientations’) on 23 December 2019, the first Horizon Europe strategic planning exercise has entered its next phase in line with the political priorities and policy initiatives of the Commission.

Disclaimer: this document aims only to support a brainstorming exercise. It does not present a draft of the future first Horizon Europe strategic plan, nor any future position of the European Commission.

1. Outline of the first Strategic Plan for Horizon Europe

The outline of the Strategic Plan will be based on three building blocks (see also figure below):

- the legal basis of Horizon Europe, which sets out all the elements that must be integrated in the Strategic Plan, based on the March/April 2019 political agreement between the European Parliament and the Council (Annex 1);
- the six von der Leyen Commission priorities for 2019-2024 and the ensuing policy initiatives. They are the starting point for the identification of relevant key strategic orientations for research and innovation support (see point 2 below);
- the expected impacts resulting from the co-design process, as reflected in the ‘Orientations’ document of December 2019.

All the constituting elements of the Strategic Plan, including partnerships and missions, have already been or are currently being subject to co-design activities, with the exception of “the key strategic orientations for research and innovation support”.

It is suggested to identify a limited number of key strategic orientations for research and innovation support, which should aim at highlighting the specific contribution of research and innovation to the achievement of our political priorities. The definition of these orientations should therefore start from the six Commission priorities for 2019-2024 (as shown in Annex 2) to identify where they would require new or strengthened R&I efforts and then compare these with the expected impacts already identified through co-design. This work would focus in particular on Pillar II (“Global challenges and European industrial competitiveness”) but would also cover relevant activities in the other two Pillars and in the Widening participation and strengthening the European Research Area part.
For Pillar II, each expected impact elaborated at cluster level would be matched against at least one key strategic orientation. Additional expected impacts may be prepared to cover other parts of the programme, without offsetting the bottom-up nature of their respective activities (such as the European Research Council, Marie Skłodowska Curie actions, European Innovation Council, as well as the Widening participation and strengthening the European Research Area part).

This approach would facilitate the integrated implementation of Horizon Europe, as well as the programming of cross-cluster issues.

The draft Strategic Plan will take into account an Analysis, as prescribed by the Horizon Europe legal basis (Annex 1). In consistence with the legal requirements, the synergies between Horizon Europe and the other EU funding programmes of the multi-annual financial framework 2021-2027 will be addressed therein.

2. Indicative timetable for the preparation, discussion and adoption of the first Horizon Europe Strategic Plan

The following steps are proposed:

- By the end of March 2020: agreement on the outline and structure of the first Strategic Plan;
- By the end of April/May 2020: the Commission presents a first draft of the first Strategic Plan to the European Parliament and the shadow strategic configuration of the Horizon Europe Programme Committee asking for comments in view of further iterations in May and June.
- By the end of June 2020: A web based co-design exercise may be organised to bolster the impact-oriented narrative of the plan, before the Commission presents a second draft of the first Strategic Plan in view of its finalisation.

In order to fine-tune this indicative timetable, a limited number of questions have been prepared (Annex 3).
Article 4a - Strategic Plan

1. In accordance with Article 6 paragraph 6 of the [Framework Programme Regulation], the implementation of the Specific Programme shall be facilitated by a multiannual Strategic Plan of research and innovation activities, also promoting consistency between the work programmes, EU priorities and national priorities. The result of the Strategic Planning Process shall be set out in a multiannual Strategic Plan, for preparing the content in the work programmes (as set out in Article 11) covering a maximum period of four years, while retaining sufficient flexibility to respond rapidly to new and emerging challenges, unexpected opportunities and crises.

2. The Strategic Planning Process shall focus in particular on the 'Global challenges and European industrial competitiveness' pillar and cover also relevant activities in other pillars and the Widening Participation and Strengthening the European Research Area part.

The Commission shall ensure early involvement and extensive exchanges with the Member States, and extensive exchanges with the European Parliament, complemented by consultation with stakeholders and the public at large. This will contribute to a stronger engagement with citizens and civil society.

Member States may support the strategic planning process also through providing an overview of national consultations/citizens’ contributions that feed into the Strategic Plan.

3. The Strategic Plan shall be adopted by the Commission, by means of an implementing act, in accordance with the examination procedure referred to in Article 12(4). The Strategic Plan shall correspond to the objectives and activities described in Annex 1. This Implementing Act shall contain the following elements, relating to the period covered:

   a. Key strategic orientations for R&I support, including a description of expected impacts, cross-cluster issues and intervention areas covered.

   b. Identification of European Partnerships according to Article 8(1)[a and b] of the [FP Regulation].

   ba. Identification of Missions according to Article 5 of the Specific Programme and Article 7 and Annex Va of the Regulation establishing Horizon Europe.

   c. Areas for international cooperation, actions to be aligned with Research & Innovation of other nations and regions of the world at major scale, or actions to be carried out in cooperation with organisations in third countries.

   d. Specific issues, such as the balance between research and innovation; the integration of Social Sciences and Humanities; the role of Key Enabling Technologies and strategic value chains; gender equality, including the integration of gender dimension in the R&I content; adherence to the highest ethics and integrity standards; priorities for dissemination and exploitation.

4. The Strategic Plan shall take into account an analysis covering at least the following elements:

   a) Political, socio-economic and environmental drivers which are relevant for the EU and Member States' policy priorities.

   b) The contribution of research and innovation to the realisation of EU policy objectives, while capitalizing on studies, other scientific evidence and relevant initiatives at EU and national level, including institutionalised partnerships according to article 8(1)(c)of the [Framework Programme Regulation].
c) Evidence-base resulting from foresight activities, S&T and innovation indicators, international developments such as the implementation of the SDGs and feedback from implementation, including monitoring the implementation of specific measures with regard to widening participation and sharing excellence and participation of SMEs.

d) Priorities with the potential to be implemented in synergy with other EU programmes.

e) A description of the various approaches for stakeholder consultation and citizen engagement as part of the work to develop Work Programmes;

f) Complementarity and synergies with planning of the KICs of the EIT in accordance with Regulation 294/2008/EC.

5. The strategic planning process shall be complemented by a strategic coordinating process for European Partnerships, with participation of Member States and the Commission on equal footing. It shall function as an entry point for foresight analysis, analysis and advice on the portfolio development, possible setup, implementation, monitoring and phasing out of R&I partnerships and be guided by a comprehensive criteria framework, based on Annex III of the Horizon Europe Regulation.
Annex 2

More details on the
KEY STRATEGIC ORIENTATIONS
and their connection with the
legal basis, Commission priorities and outcome of the co-design
(work in progress)
Annex 3
Questions

- Does the proposed approach adequately capture the main elements for preparing the draft strategic plan and adhere to the legal basis?
- Do you agree that the strategic plan should be structured and drafted in order to impress on the widest possible readership the systemic vision and directionality that will guide the implementation of Horizon Europe?
- Do you agree that - while the expected impacts will be defined at cluster level - the key strategic orientations should normally cover different clusters, and different parts/pillars of Horizon Europe, as relevant?
- Do you see the need to define separate expected impacts for the activities of pillar I, pillar III and the Widening/ERA part?
- Other suggestions you may want to share?

Please, send your reply by 23 March end of business to the following address: renzo.tomellini@ec.europa.eu