

Dear members of the High Level Group,

As representatives of the undersigned networks of young and early-stage researchers, we would like to express our deepest appreciation for the excellent work of the High Level Group (HLG) in producing the report “LAB – FAB – APP: Investigating in the European future we want”. We recognize the importance of the next Framework Programme (FP9) as a major driver for European research, as a tool to improve working conditions for all researchers in the European Union, and in setting the example for research ecosystems beyond the EU. We would like to share our reflections on the document from the perspective of early- and mid-career researchers. These were informed by a recent survey and consultations within each network. Many of the points raised here are also addressed in the [Bratislava Declaration of Young Researchers](#).

Reply to Recommendations 2, 3, 4 and 5: Increase focus on driving societal impact of R&I in FP9

Although the report acknowledges the importance of societal impact of research (4&5), the concept of research as a driver for economic impact is pervasive throughout the document. Driving innovation to create future markets and support European industry’s success are undoubtedly key missions of research, and should be stimulated further (2). However, it is essential to recognise that research is an important driver for transforming people and society, and for advancing key challenges that European and global societies face. The mission-oriented approach, based on the UN Sustainable Development Goals as global reference framework, suggested by the HLG is highly welcome (5). However, it should be stressed that not all R&I activities will lead to marketable solutions. This means that future R&I programmes should acknowledge and communicate the importance of societal impact of R&I projects as opposed to focusing solely on economic impact. The focus on innovation and entrepreneurship should be widened to include social innovation aspects as well (e.g. ethics, citizenship, democracy, human rights, education).

As priority areas for FP9, early and mid-career researchers highlighted¹ the following issues:

- 1. There is a need to develop European shared values by continuing to explore and better understand the ideas of citizenship, of ethics, of democracy, and of the rights that underpin our European Union.**
- 2. Humanities, arts and culture should be recognised as integral to solving the challenges that face us. This should be respected in the make-up of funding schemes. We highly support the HLG to fully integrate social sciences and humanities in research and innovation missions addressing global challenges (5).**
- 3. The nature of science & the formation of scientists. FP9 should consider ‘How do we structure the ‘system of science’ and educate those who do it?’ Open Science, ethics, interdisciplinarity, trust, and expertise are topics that should be explored within science curricula. Education should be research-informed. Systems of education should be family-friendly and embrace diversity. We strongly support the inclusion of the aspects proposed in Recommendation 3 in the design of the FP9 research programme, and propose to expand them to include societal innovation aspects as well.**

¹ Data presented at Stakeholder Conference “R&I: shaping our future”, 3rd July 2017, Brussels

Reply to Recommendations 3, 4 and 7: We welcome the suggested action to simplify the EU funding programmes further (7). The top-down nature, excessive bureaucracy and emphasis on large consortia that were the hallmarks of previous Framework Programmes have created barriers for access by early-stage researchers. **We believe that FP9 could break down those barriers by supporting clear, transparent, stable, and family-friendly career trajectories for young and early-stage researchers across Europe.** However, the HLG report lacks provision of additional opportunities for early-stage researchers to integrate them better in new R&I programmes (3). Both highlighted programmes (ERC and Marie Skłodowska-Curie Individual Fellowships) target researchers who already have an established track record. Additional visions or opportunities for making FP9 funding programme more attractive and accessible for developing researchers are missing. **Another important aspect that is not mentioned in the report is evaluation criteria for researchers,** which are currently unclear, non-transparent and do not properly account for research quality or appropriately determine research impact. We welcome the suggestion by the HLG to customise the evaluation process of R&I proposals (4). Our consultations show that Young and early-stage researchers agree that scientific excellence should be the main criterion for awarding research funding (82%). However, they also agree that a broader range of criteria such as interdisciplinarity and innovative methodologies (76%), degree of openness (72%), and innovation potential and expected social, political and cultural impact criteria (70%) should be considered.

How FP9 should look to empower young researchers:

- 1. Focus FP9 funding on institutions that abide by the principles set out in the EU Charter & Code for Researchers.**
- 2. Make support for inclusion of early-stage researchers a cross cutting issue across all research and innovation projects funded.**
- 3. FP9 must do more to improve the diversity of those it funds. For research that FP9 enables to impact all Europeans, it must be done by a diverse community that reflects the diversity within Europe.**
- 4. Clarify and publish evaluation criteria for funding calls. These should be based on a combination of quantitative and qualitative indicators tailored to the goal.**

We appreciate your ongoing efforts and hope that your work on European research policy will lead to an excellent research environment and we are ready to help you on this journey. We would welcome the opportunity to provide the HLG with the nomination of a representative who could provide the perspective of young and early-career researchers to participate more directly in development of future iterations of the FP9.

Yours sincerely,

Young Researchers on behalf of:

BRATISLAVA DECLARATION OF YOUNG RESEARCHERS



Leibniz-Informationszentrum
Wirtschaft
Leibniz Information Centre
for Economics



Young European Associated Researchers
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