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EFN Input to:

The Green Paper on a common strategic framework for EU research and innovation funding

This European Commission **Green Paper** proposes major changes to EU research and innovation funding to make participation easier, increase scientific and economic impact and provide better value for money. The questions are the same as those set out in the Green Paper. To facilitate responding, you are asked to rate the relative importance of the aspects covered in each of the questions. Text responses are limited to 1500 characters. If you wish to provide detailed written comments you are encouraged to use the written response submission form.

Information about the respondent

- I am answering as: NGO.
- Country of location: EU level organisation (Belgium).
- My/ my organisations' main activity is: Policy Advocacy and Lobby to the EU institutions for the nursing profession.
- The name of my organisation is: The European Federation of Nurses Associations.
- I/ my organisation has received funding from: other EC programme as the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme, Health Programme 2008-2013,
- Have you or do you intend to submit a separate written response to this consultation?
NO.

Working together to deliver on Europe 2020

The questions in this section correspond to Section 4.1 of the Green Paper.

1. How should the Common Strategic Framework make EU research and innovation funding more attractive and easy to access for participants? What is needed in addition to a single entry point with common IT tools, a one stop shop for support, a streamlined set of funding instruments covering the full innovation chain and further steps towards administrative simplification?

The EFN welcomes the proposed Common Strategic Framework for EU research and appreciates the intention to simplify the administrative process during application and reporting process for a project. Therefore, the EFN considers the proposed one-stop-shop website as a useful tool where all the instruments could be classified to several criteria allowing potential participants to have a clear view of the available funding.

The EFN believes that a continuously open calls with several deadlines during the year will let other kind of participants to jump into EU funding once they have something to offer, without the need of waiting until next official announcement and avoiding the rush presentation of projects.

One of the changes EFN really welcomes is the decrease of bureaucracy in the process. Currently it is necessary people well trained in the process to submit successful applications. Also, the foreseen technical assistance could open the participation of SME (small and medium enterprises) that currently cannot cope with the burden of process they have to submit and also because language barriers are often the reason for not participating in the process. In some cases, universities have also to contract people to prepare the applications for EU funding. The process is even more complicated than other projects funding by national ministries. There is an urgent need to streamline and eliminate the transaction costs of engagement.

The current lack of coordination and harmonisation is unfortunately leading to a waste of efforts, money, resources and credibility. More cooperation and links between the funding are welcome as will avoid the duplication and fragmentation.

How important are the aspects covered in this question? **Very important**

2 How should EU funding best cover the full innovation cycle from research to market uptake?

The EFN believes that there is a gap between the results and conclusions we achieve from research and their ultimately applicability to real life and practice. From EFN point of view, we see that some projects ongoing and the real needs of users and market are mismatched. There is a gap that makes difficult the creation of links to orient the research more into practical needs. THEREFORE, the EFN considers that a new strategy should be launched to establish channels looking for the possibility of taking up the results of the research for the market when the project is still funded. The results have to be promising but also highly impactful.

In that sense, to communicate the research and make it available for the public to use it and implement it, it is crucial to spread the dissemination funding and to have more resources for the project to be visible enough and to go beyond traditional dissemination strategies. Dissemination should go back to the public! These strategies of communication and dissemination must be designed from the conception of the project and with enough funding allocated to that. The ultimate users of innovation (citizens, enterprises and public sector) should be involved much earlier in the projects to accelerate and broaden the use of results. Nurses will support projects and results which will help nurses to improve the care provided to the citizens. In this process, a prioritized and increased number of research nurses will contribute to develop useful results for the nursing community. It is necessary to encourage the better uptake and the use of research results by companies, enterprises, citizens, public authorities, civil society and policy makers. Up till now, engagement in steering committees is seen as an annex and takes place at a voluntary basis.

In order to build a bridge between the research and the market, more funding should also be allocated for the implementation of results and for the access to other research tools that orient the nursing practice towards evidence based healthcare (such as the Joanna Briggs Institute).

How important are the aspects covered in this question? **Very important.**

3 What are the characteristics of EU funding that maximise the benefit of acting at the EU level? Should there be a strong emphasis on leveraging other sources of funding?

The EFN believes that the EU funding has the potential to develop these areas needed of a coordinated and harmonised development that never could be achieved by national/regional funding. It is also a tool to strengthening the cooperation and synergies among necessary different countries and different stakeholders as many countries have important problems between stakeholders' cooperation with negative impact on social policy and patient safety when the objectives should be oriented to get common useful results for EU citizens.

Furthermore, EFN would like to see even more encouragement and orientation of the EU funding towards the promotion of development of all EU countries and positively contributing to the EU enlargement. Traditional research countries find easy the participation and access to EU funding while other Eastern EU countries encounter several difficulties in apply, and even joining the consortium. The funding should also be oriented to decrease the current inequalities among Member States in terms of health and accessibility to healthcare and social innovation.

For EFN, social innovation and wellbeing needs to become a key cornerstone of the upcoming research program with scaling up the 'local' new knowledge developed and the experiences collected (ethnographic approach) that should be transferable to other EU Member States and continents. Existing networks should be empowered to reach these ambitious research objectives.

How important are the aspects covered in this question? **Very important.**

4 How should EU research and innovation funding be used to pool Member States' research and innovation resources? Should Joint Programming Initiatives between groups of Member States be supported?

The EFN believes that EU research and Innovation funding should be used to boost and upgrade the resources that exist already at the national/regional level. Creating institutional synergies and dissemination networks with the public, and also promoting the exchange of the researched and links with educational programmes to promote a culture and a loop of exchange of practice will pool the resources at EU level forming a EU research capacity highly competitive. Therefore, when selecting a project, the evaluators should have a broader view on society and the potential creation of partnerships and their sustainability.

The EFN considers that potential Joint Programmes Initiatives, defined by an optimal strategy, skilling up the research effort and promoting an analytical power should be considered. These Joint Programmes Initiatives could be oriented to build research capacity in addition to boost cooperation.

How important are the aspects covered in this question? **Important.**

5 What should be the balance between smaller, targeted projects and larger, strategic ones?

The EFN believes that a fixed balance between types of project will be counterproductive for a broad participation. The balance between the types of projects needs to be determined by the objectives and results we aim to get. The flexibility of types of projects would let civil society, organisations and SME be more participated in the common framework programme.



Regarding the nursing profession, nursing specific and concrete topics within small and targeted projects are needed to improve participation. At national level it is seen that the participation in the projects normally requires more human resources than what is available.

How important are the aspects covered in this question? **Important.**

6 How could the Commission ensure the balance between a unique set of rules allowing for radical simplification and the necessity to keep a certain degree of flexibility and diversity to achieve objectives of different instruments, and respond to the needs of different beneficiaries, in particular SMEs?

EFN considers that a unified set of rules setting general eligibility criteria could be a step into the right direction, taking into account that each instrument could have further specific criteria to a better achievement of objectives as different project will converge and different methodologies will be needed.

Apart from this specificity, EFN welcomes the creation of a common minimum set of indicators as well as a common approach to cost-benefit analysis methodology, in particular used for project selection.

EFN shares the vision that each instrument may focus on selected, well defined priorities which are in line with an overall strategy. EFN acknowledges that such an approach has the advantage of orienting resources towards common targets, even if at different levels and with different instruments.

How important are the aspects covered in this question? **Important.**

7. What should be the measures of success for EU research and innovation funding? Which performance indicators could be used?

First of all, we need to define success! Which are the main criteria for measuring success?

Do we use scientific, political, economic or social criteria to measure success of research design and outcomes?

For EFN, one important measure of success is to assess the applicability and transferability of the research outcomes made for the EU citizens, patients and those who are providing the services, in particular nurses working at the bedside.

Therefore, the projects should be guided by the criteria of public interest, improvement of quality of life, promotion of social inclusion and promotion of good health and well-being. Proof of success is funding projects and networks that contribute to the benefit of EU citizens, improving health outcomes and reducing health inequalities.

Nevertheless, there is an excessive fragmentation among the EU research projects and other EU programmes funds that are resulting in different conclusions among the same topics as standardization is referred. A better reuse and coordination among the outcomes of projects already developed should be reinforced to contribute to a harmonisation of efforts.

Regarding the eHealth activities, as the interoperability of infrastructures and applications of services has been described as an essential component for a successful deployment, EFN therefore regrets that although reference is made to different EU projects, different definitions of 'interoperability' are used



and concluded. This lack of coordination and harmonisation is unfortunately leading to a waste of efforts, money, resources and credibility.

How important are the aspects covered in this question? **Important.**

8. How should EU research and innovation funding relate to regional and national funding? How should this funding complement funds from the future Cohesion policy, designed to help the less developed regions of the EU, and the rural development funds?

EFN believes that the Commission and regional governments should simplify procedures with a view to ensuring that funds are allocated in a transparent and efficient manner and delivered swiftly to final beneficiaries. The EU funding should be more interconnected to deliver results that have correlative relationships contributing to achieve more impact.

The Commission should provide technical assistance to MS and regions by setting up an appropriate training program to promote the bottom up activities, the public participation and the integrated approach among different funding. The EU funding on research should have a link with the actions directed to invest in less developed regions¹.

How important are the aspects covered in this question? **Very important.**

Tackling Societal Challenges

The questions in this section correspond to Section 4.2 of the Green Paper.

9. How should a stronger focus on societal challenges affect the balance between curiosity-driven research and agenda-driven activities?

Agenda driven activities are intimately involved in a subject matter. There needs to be some space for the curiosity driven and exploration to be able to have researchers with the needed freedom to research and to look into other topics to find different solutions, for EFN this means innovation.

However, EFN welcomes the stronger focus that the Commission is giving to orient the future framework for research as we believe that the research should be designed to answer the questions of concern for the end users in a complex society. The demands of the society are growing and gathering evidence is becoming more and more important to orient a sensible policy-making process.

The EFN acknowledges a great focus on innovation and prevention regarding the societal challenges. Public health should remain as a core principle to orient research efforts to lead to a healthier society in the future. Prevention and health promotion are crucial concepts that need to bear in mind of researchers to work towards the evidence and guidelines that will have an impact on the self-management of EU citizens, both to maintain states of health and to optimise health within and across disease groups

How important are the aspects covered in this question? **Very Important.**

¹ [EFN Position Paper on Structural and Social Cohesion Funds.](#)



10. Should there be more room for bottom-up activities?

The EFN believes that the bottom up activities are the ones which are oriented to answer the needs of the society and also the ones in which the involvement of end users is highly promoted. This type of activities will lead to achieve more practical success.

How important are the aspects covered in this question? **Important.**

11. How should EU research and innovation funding best support policy-making and forward-looking activities?

The EFN considers that EU research and innovation should not miss the practicability and applicability to the society challenges that the policy making process has to cope with. The links and synergies between the laboratories and universities, and the real life need to be empowered to support with evidence the political decisions. The criteria of public health, improvement of quality of life, promotion of social inclusion and promotion of good health and well-being, are in terms of health and social care, extremely relevant to support the policy-making process aiming at re-engineering the healthcare system and contributing to their future sustainability.

Having stronger links with the market and end users' needs will orient the research and the innovation funding into activities that will have continuity in the future. This process could be easily achieved involving the citizens, enterprises, end users and the public sector much earlier in the projects.

How important are the aspects covered in this question? **Important.**

12. How should the role of the Commission's Joint Research Centre be improved in supporting policy-making and forward-looking activities?

The **Commission's Joint Research Centre** is unknown to most stakeholders and is for sure NOT gender balanced. We assume this centre is quite political and posts are calculated distributions with other EU Centres, like the ECDC, the EMA, to name a few.

How important are the aspects covered in this question? **Don't know**

13. How could EU research and innovation activities attract greater interest and involvement of citizens and civil society?

The EFN strongly believes that a better harmonisation and simplification of the EU funding will attract the active participation of the citizens and the civil society. The selection of topics in the proposals of the EU funding plays a decisive role in the participation of the society, therefore, EFN welcomes the new focus on societal challenges as an opportunity for the European Union to invest in concrete proposals that also benefit women and men in the street.

How important are the aspects covered in this question? **Very important**



Strengthening competitiveness

The questions in this section correspond to Section 4.3 of the Green Paper.

14. How should EU funding best take account of the broad nature of innovation, including non-technological innovation, eco-innovation and social innovation?

We need to define FIRST the term “social innovation”.

The EFN believes that EU funding should take account of social innovation activities providing more funding to these activities instead of promoting only the technological development. The focus on prevention and promotion activities and long-term projects should also be encouraged to evaluate the impact of healthy behaviours.

A special attention is needed to see and understand the importance of the social determinants of health as the promotion of health is a matter concerning all policy fields that should transversally contribute to enrich the health policies for the improvement of healthcare.

How important are the aspects covered in this question? **Very Important.**

15. How should industrial participation in EU research and innovation programmes be strengthened? How should Joint Technology Initiatives (such as those launched in the current Framework Programmes) or different forms of 'public private partnership' be supported? What should be the role of European Technology Platforms?

The EFN envisages that these “public private partnerships” could also be extended into other fields and not only focused on industrial sector. The concept of public-private partnerships relates to trust and engagement of civil society. It could be also a way to connect the research with the market participating in ambitious objectives, mobilising high public and private investments to implement the results concerning important societal and healthcare challenges and involving long-term initiatives in prevention and promotion.

How important are the aspects covered in this question? **Important**

16. How and what types of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SME) should be supported at EU level; how should this complement national and regional level schemes? What kind of measures should be taken to decisively facilitate the participation of SMEs in EU research and innovation programmes?

The EFN believes that the lack of participation of SME could also be due to the huge efforts often necessary to develop an EU project.

However, the proposed focus on societal challenges could be an open door for the SME participation as the topics selected will be closer to their daily reality.

Besides, partnerships among them to reduce efforts and to make the participation affordable should be encouraged and foreseen.

How important are the aspects covered in this question? **Important.**



17 How should open, light and fast implementation schemes (e.g. building on the current FET actions and CIP eco-innovation market replication projects) be designed to allow flexible exploration and commercialisation of novel ideas, in particular by SMEs?

The EFN is supportive of new entrepreneurs (SME) in the health sector as we foresee them as a clear step towards fast implementations schemes. Apart of promoting EU growth, the participation of the SME into the EU research will make them taking an active role in the implementation phase. Furthermore, they could contribute to create links to orient the research into real practical needs.

How important are the aspects covered in this question? **Very important.**

18. How should EU-level financial instruments (equity and debt based) be used more extensively?

The EFN considers that the current funding available, as explained in the green paper² under the first point, should be extensively enough to have clear impact on the EU citizens. There is a common feeling among EU citizens concerning the uncertainty in where are these huge funding invested.

How important are the aspects covered in this question? **Important.**

19. Should new approaches to supporting research and innovation be introduced, in particular through public procurement, including through rules on pre-commercial procurement, and/or inducement prizes?

The EFN argues that the social (sustainable) dimension to public procurement needs to be strengthened so that it is a tool to promote social, environmental and economic converge upwards. This means removing the 'lowest price' option and ensuring that sustainability criteria are included in the different stages of the procurement process. It is necessary to look at the budget allocated to some projects; good quality projects could need more amount of money and should not be under the pressure of fixing into the lowest amount.

The EFN stresses EU procurement rules should underpin quality of research objectives.

How important are the aspects covered in this question? **Important.**

20. How should intellectual property rules governing EU funding strike the right balance between competitiveness aspects and the need for access to and dissemination of scientific results?

The EFN believes that respecting the ownership of the results and the authorship, the results should be disseminate and at the public disposal as soon as they are available. Public private mix financial agreement needs to be explored to balance innovation.

How important are the aspects covered in this question? **Important.**

² Green Paper: From Challenges to Opportunities: Towards a Common Strategic Framework for EU Research and Innovation funding. COM (2011) 48.



Strengthening Europe's science base and the European Research Area

The questions in this section correspond to Section 4.4 of the Green Paper.

21 How should the role of the European Research Council be strengthened in supporting world class excellence?

The EFN considers that the European Research Council should be also better known by the stakeholders and the society. What we know about them is that up till now their aim was to stimulate scientific excellence encouraging the very best, truly creative scientists that has led in a secret bubble group that are very far from the real needs the EU must to tackle.

From the EFN perspective, the excellence is not only placed in the most intellectual minds and in complicated equations but in practicability and efficiency to translate research findings into practice. It is essential to involve the civil society also in this European Research Council to achieve an optimal governance approach.

However, EFN is concerned about the message that appears in the ERC website saying that the approach of the ERC allows identifying new opportunities and directions in any field of research rather than being led by priorities set by politicians. EFN believes that there should be necessary links and involvement of the politicians to give continuity and implementation to the research results.

Furthermore, in order to achieve the focus on the societal challenges, the health workforce needs to play an essential and active role in the ERC to express their needs and orient the research into practical solutions without losing the flexibility. Therefore, nurses, as the largest occupational group in the healthcare sector are a necessary piece into that puzzle.

How important are the aspects covered in this question? **Very important**

22 How should EU support assist Member States in building up excellence?

The EFN believes that EU can support Member States in building capacity in areas of skills scarcity. Besides, promoting mobility and grants for research and researches are other ways of building excellence in MS.

How important are the aspects covered in this question? **Important.**

23. How should the role of Marie Curie Actions be strengthened in promoting researcher mobility and developing attractive careers?

EFN is not answering this question.

24. What actions should be taken at EU level to further strengthen the role of women in science and innovation?

Research and development itself is not gender neutral, as advancements in science and technology affect different groups in different ways. It is therefore essential in order to support equity policies and developments that women rights are represented in research and development. Women participation reflects gendered interests and a unique approach. Therefore, it is important that women are represented also in the research planning committees and to reach a high level of involvement and



enhance their contribution; furthermore, they also have to be present in positions of research institutions, selection of research topics and implementation of projects and programmes.

The EFN believes that the EU policy can have an impact in enhancing the participation of women in research. The EU has a role to play in incentivising and supporting family friendly policies to allow women and men to equally participate in research and development. Many researchers in nursing are women and many topics in nursing are researched by qualitative methods. For this kind of research, the protocol is usually much more difficult and less prioritised than quantitative research. It is needed to invest more EU-funding suitable for the nursing research taking also a gender approach.

How important are the aspects covered in this question? **Very important.**

25. How should research infrastructures (including EU-wide e-Infrastructures) be supported at EU level?

The EFN believes that research infrastructures should be supported and promoted at EU level. The EU needs to facilitate the creation of networks, innovative partnerships and synergies of collaboration where infrastructures are vital in the process.

Even though research infrastructures are necessary in fields of science and technology, it is also necessary to explore other infrastructures to allow the social innovation orientation. Social and healthcare developments and research need as well investments in infrastructures to build a strong base of knowledge and evidence, including observatories, data collection banks and communication networks.

How important are the aspects covered in this question? **Very important**

26. How should international cooperation with non-EU countries be supported e.g. in terms of priority areas of strategic interest, instruments, reciprocity (including on IPR aspects) or cooperation with Member States?

The EFN believes that as part of the EU enlargement it is important to promote the cooperation among countries with similar needs. Cooperation and synergies are becoming more and more necessary.

How important are the aspects covered in this question? **Important**

27 Which key issues and obstacles concerning the ERA should EU funding instruments seek to overcome, and which should be addressed by other (e.g. legislative) measures?

The EFN has not participated in the ERA Strategy so there is no comment from EFN side in this respect.

How important are the aspects covered in this question? **Don't know.**



Closing questions

Are there any other ideas of comments which you believe are important for future EU research and innovation funding and are not covered in the Green Paper?

The EFN finds missed the lack of involvement of the final end users in the research process. Qualitative research on the experiences and needs of end users, patients, health professionals, social workers, is important and neglected.

A research link between the industry, the EU policies and the end users is needed to achieve better research and policy outcomes.

The EFN hopes that the next EU framework for EU funding put more human faces on their projects and safe itself of being absorbed in a technical bubble that is not ultimately correlated with the EU citizens' needs.

Concerning the future healthcare challenges as the ageing population, the ageing health workforce and the economic constraints EU lives with, EFN considers that more focus should be put on develop prevention and information systems in terms of health to let EU citizens to live their health status in a more empowered and independent way in order to balance the huge and increasing costs on healthcare.

