



March 2021



*“The strategic plan’s orientations will ensure that our common EU policy priorities benefit from new knowledge, ideas and innovation. This new approach is another way to make sure that the research and innovation funded by the EU will address the challenges faced by Europeans.”*

**Mariya Gabriel** Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth

## THE STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2024

### AN AMBITIOUS PLAN FOR AN AMBITIOUS PROGRAMME

Horizon Europe is geared towards impact to contribute to our wellbeing and prosperity. To realise its ambitious goals, they need to be translated into concrete actions. The strategic plan defines the orientations for the first four years of the programme and outlines the contributions of its various parts. By establishing a strategic research and innovation agenda, it takes an important step towards the work programmes.

### Strategic orientations that guide research and innovation

The strategic plan defines four **key strategic orientations**. They mirror the political priorities of the European Union, outline the way research and innovation can address them and enable us to better measure impact.

Each of the key strategic orientations encompasses three to four **impact areas**, which in turn link to a number of **expected impacts**. They are a core element of the impact-driven approach of Horizon Europe, because they describe the long-term effects to which research and innovation are due to contribute. In total, the strategic plan defines 32 expected impacts that cover a wide range of social, economic, ecological and scientific aspirations.

The strategic plan outlines how the six Clusters of Horizon Europe’s Pillar II, ‘Global challenges and European industrial competitiveness’, will contribute to the key strategic orientations and the corresponding expected impacts. Every expected impact links to at least one Cluster, in order to ensure full coverage.

While the focus of the strategic plan is on Pillar II, it also covers relevant activities in the other two pillars and the part ‘Widening Participation and Strengthening the European Research Area’. This is to ensure synergies across all Horizon Europe programme components.

## Four key strategic orientations for greater impact

**Promoting an open strategic autonomy by leading the development of key digital, enabling and emerging technologies, sectors and value chains** to accelerate and steer the digital and green transitions through human-centred technologies and innovations



**Restoring Europe's ecosystems and biodiversity, and managing sustainably natural resources** to ensure food security and a clean and healthy environment



**Making Europe the first digitally enabled circular, climate-neutral and sustainable economy** through the transformation of its mobility, energy, construction and production systems



**Creating a more resilient, inclusive and democratic European society**, prepared and responsive to threats and disasters, addressing inequalities and providing high-quality health care, and empowering all citizens to act in the green and digital transitions



### International cooperation

International cooperation is a common priority throughout Horizon Europe. It is essential for tackling many global challenges and therefore underpins all four key strategic orientations.

International cooperation enables excellent science and provides Europe with access to resources, know-how, value chains and markets outside the EU. The EU will balance openness with the need to safeguard its interests in strategic areas and act in accordance with its high standards and principles.

### Innovative approaches for maximum impact

The strategic plan also presents new and modernised approaches to facilitate implementation. For example by pooling resources of a wide range of public and private partners through **European Partnerships**. The strategic plan identifies a total number of 29 co-programmed and co-funded partnerships with partners from national governments, industry, civil society organisations, and many more.

The strategic plan also prepares the ground for five **EU Missions**. They are a commitment to solve major societal challenges in a holistic and interdisciplinary way - fighting cancer, adapting to climate change, protecting our oceans, living in greener cities and ensuring soil health for food, people, nature, and climate.

## Addressing key issues across the board

A number of considerations are crosscutting or horizontal in nature, which means that they are relevant to all programme components. They are identified by the strategic plan. When drafting the work programmes, the European Commission will make sure that these issues are addressed appropriately, for example through the selection of relevant topics or by adapting the evaluation criteria.



### EU Taxonomy for sustainable activities

This term refers to a very recent accomplishment of the European Union, the 2020 Regulation on Taxonomy<sup>2</sup>. It provides a 'green list' of sustainable economic activities and introduces the 'do no harm' principle: Recovery projects can only be funded, if they are in line with the long-term, green ambitions of the European Union. Since the strategic plan defines this principle as a horizontal issue for Horizon Europe, it will be adhered to in all its research and innovation endeavours.

## THE EIGHT HORIZONTAL TOPICS



<sup>2</sup> Regulation (EU) 2020/852 on the establishment of a framework to facilitate sustainable investment, and amending Regulation (EU) 2019/2088

## Strategic by (co-)design

The Commission launched a co-design process for the plan in 2019, the very first of its kind, which aimed at including as many views and perspectives as possible through events and surveys. By involving relevant stakeholders and interested citizens, the plan benefited from collective knowledge and creativity.

An [orientations report](#) summarised the main results of these co-design exercises. It laid the basis for the strategic plan's drafting, which involved several services of the European Commission. The EU Member States, the Members of the European Economic Area and the European Parliament also made important contributions through exchanges with the Commission.

### MORE INFORMATION

[Horizon Europe's Strategic Plan](#)

[#HorizonEU](#)



Publications Office  
of the European Union

Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2021

© European Union, 2021

Reuse is authorised provided the source is acknowledged and the original meaning or message of the document are not distorted. The European Commission shall not be liable for any consequence stemming from the reuse. The reuse policy of the European Commission documents is implemented by Commission Decision 2011/833/EU of 12 December 2011 on the reuse of Commission documents (OJ L 330, 14.12.2011, p. 39).

All images © European Union, unless otherwise stated. Image sources: © ivector # 235536634 # 249868181 # 251163013 # 266009682, # 273480523 # 362422833 # 241215668 # 244690530 # 245719946 # 251163053 # 252508849, © shooarts # 121467308, 2020. Source: Stock.Adobe.com. Icons © Flaticon – all rights reserved.

Print ISBN 978-92-76-36486-3 doi: 10.2777/96849 KI-03-20-705-EN-C

PDF ISBN 978-92-76-24755-5 doi: 10.2777/689077 KI-03-20-705-EN-N