



EU Missions

Frequently Asked Questions

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Research and
Innovation

Note: this document is for background information and may be used for communication purposes in relation to EU missions, although the statements it contains do not represent official policy of the European Commission.

1. What are EU missions?

EU missions are ambitious and bold commitments to find solutions to major societal challenges, through leveraging the power of research and innovation together with policy and resources from across the EU. This work is taking place in five areas: cancer; adaptation to climate change including societal transformation; healthy oceans, seas coastal and inland waters; climate-neutral and smart cities; soil health and food.

EU missions are a new instrument of Horizon Europe, the EU research and innovation programme for the years 2021-27. They will operate as portfolios of actions – including research projects, legislative initiatives or policy measures – to achieve a relevant and measurable goal that could not be achieved through individual actions. The draft Horizon Europe legislation¹ details missions' selection criteria. See below the annex on Horizon Europe legislation on EU missions. Each mission will have a specific timeframe and budget determined by the size of the challenge. EU missions also go beyond research and innovation, and will involve other sectors to achieve the goals of major EU policies such as the European Green Deal or EU Beating Cancer Plan. European citizens are central to the story of missions; as users and beneficiaries, at the same time as being engaged in the design, implementation and monitoring of the missions.

2. What could be a possible EU mission?

Some [examples](#) of possible EU missions were proposed by Prof Marianna Mazzucato in her two [reports](#) for the European Commission which helped to shape policy. The European Commission's proposal for Horizon Europe includes five Mission Areas for possible missions.² In September 2020 Mission Boards, established by the European Commission to provide advice, presented their [proposals for EU missions in five areas](#).

3. How will these missions contribute to EU priorities?

The EU missions will contain actions to support Europe's transformation into a greener, healthier, more resilient continent. In this way, they will be designed to contribute to implementing the Commission's key policy objectives such as the Recovery Package, the European Green Deal or Europe's Beating Cancer Plan. They

¹ <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-15102-2018-INIT/en/pdf>

<http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-8550-2019-INIT/en/pdf>

² cancer; adaptation to climate change including societal transformation; healthy oceans, seas coastal and inland waters; climate-neutral and smart cities; soil health and food.

aim to bring tangible benefits to people in Europe and engage Europeans in their design, implementation and monitoring.

4. How many EU missions will there be?

Five missions are identified in the Horizon Europe Strategic Plan which sets out the priorities for the new Research and Innovation Programme Horizon Europe. Each of these missions is in a preparatory phase, subject to be confirmed in mid-2021 to enter the full implementation phase in autumn 2021.

5. What did Mission Boards propose?

At the [European Research & Innovation Days](#) (22-24 September 2020), each Mission Board presented its proposals to the European Commission for possible EU missions. The Mission Boards discussed with stakeholders as well as citizens, listening to their expectations and needs through a series of [events](#) across EU countries.

The five missions proposed by the Mission Boards are:

Conquering Cancer: Mission Possible

Targets by 2030: more than 3 million more lives saved, living longer and better, achieve a thorough understanding of cancer, prevent what is preventable, optimise diagnosis and treatment, support the quality of life of all people exposed to cancer, and ensure equitable access to the above across Europe.

A Climate Resilient Europe - Prepare Europe for climate disruptions and accelerate the transformation to a climate resilient and just Europe by 2030

Targets by 2030: prepare Europe to deal with climate disruptions, accelerate the transition to a healthy and prosperous future within safe planetary boundaries and scale up solutions for resilience that will trigger transformations in society.

Mission Starfish 2030: Restore our Ocean and Waters

Targets by 2030: cleaning marine and fresh waters, restoring degraded ecosystems and habitats, decarbonising the blue economy in order to sustainably harness the essential goods and services they provide.

100 Climate-Neutral Cities by 2030 - by and for the citizens

Targets by 2030: support, promote and showcase 100 European cities in their systemic transformation towards climate neutrality by 2030 and turn these cities into innovation hubs for all cities, benefiting quality of life and sustainability in Europe.

Caring for Soil is Caring for Life

Targets by 2030: at least 75% of all soils in the EU are healthy for food, people, nature and climate. The proposed mission combines research and innovation, education and training, investments and the demonstration of good practices using "Living labs" (experiments and innovation in a laboratory on the ground) and "Lighthouses" (places to showcase good practices).

6. What does the missions' preparatory phase entail?

During the current preparatory phase, the Commission will prepare a detailed implementation plan for each mission, which will include objectives, an intervention logic and key actions to be supported, investment strategy and indicators. This phase will last a maximum of 12 months, but it can be shorter, depending on missions' preparedness. Member States and Mission Boards will be consulted during the preparatory phase.

At the end of the preparatory phase, the Commission will take a decision on which missions will enter the full implementation phase. This decision will be based on an

assessment of the implementation plan against a set of simple criteria including added value and the effectiveness of the approach as a policy tool.

7. When will EU missions launch?

EU missions are expected to launch in the full implementation phase in autumn 2021. A mini work programme of actions is also included in the first Horizon Europe Work Programme expected in May 2021, to lay the foundations for the later full implementation.

8. How long will a mission last?

A mission should last as long as is needed to accomplish its objectives. There is no fixed duration, but up to 10 years is a reasonable timeframe, given the likely ambition and scale of EU missions.

9. How can Europeans participate and contribute to these missions?

The Mission Boards proposed specific missions after interactions and discussions with citizens throughout Europe. The Commission will engage with Europeans to design, monitor and assess the missions. The purpose is not only consultation, but also building close relations through listening, giving feedback and taking action.

10. What are Mission Boards and how were they selected?

The European Commission created a Mission Board for each Mission Area. These are groups of up to 15 independent experts who are asked to advise the Commission on the identification of possible missions and their implementation. Board members bring a broad mix of profiles including innovation, research, policy making, civil society and practitioner organisations. More on [Mission Boards](#).

Mission Board members and their Chairs were selected by the European Commission following a call for applications, which generated in excess of 2000 applications. Selection was made according to the criteria listed in the [call for applications](#). Across all Boards, there is a minimum of one Mission Board member from each Member State. There are 45% women and 55% men on the Mission Boards. The membership of the Mission Boards will be revised in 2021.

11. Are the Mission Board members paid for their work?

The Mission Board members are remunerated according to the standard rules applicable to the [Commission expert groups](#). Specifically, they receive a reimbursement for the travel expenses incurred to attend the Board meetings and an honorarium according to normal Commission rules for experts of €450/day.

12. What is the role of the Mission Assemblies?

Each Mission Area has an Assembly that gathers an additional pool of high-level experts. The Assemblies support the Mission Boards through ideas, knowledge and expertise that will be actively called upon to contribute to the success of the missions. The members of the Assemblies have provided inputs to the Mission Boards to support the identification of possible missions. Assembly members also give support on outreach, dissemination and consultation activities. The Mission Board Chair, or a designated Board member, is the link between the Assembly and the Mission Board.

13. How will missions be implemented?

The EU missions will involve projects and policy actions in Horizon Europe and other EU or national funding programmes, which will operate as a portfolio.

14. What is the role of Mission Managers?

Mission Managers and Deputy Mission Managers will lead the missions and be their public faces. Appointed by the Horizon Europe Steering Board, they will ensure a combined approach across different DGs. In principle, Mission Managers are appointed at the level of deputy director-general and Deputy Mission Managers on the level of director. They will be supported by secretariats. Most of the Mission Managers will be based outside DG Research and Innovation, showing that R&I is at the heart of key Commission policies.

15. What is the budget for missions?

There is no fixed budget for each mission. During the preparatory phase, each mission will have a small number of actions, with a total budget for each up to €5 million, in the first Horizon Europe Work Programme. These actions will lay the foundations for the missions, addressing urgent priorities and enhancing the potential for rapid scaling up of the investments after the conclusion of the preparatory phase.

Concerning the R&I component, the draft Horizon Europe legislation¹ stipulates that during the first 3 years of the programme, a maximum of 10% of the annual budget of Pillar II (Global Challenges and European Industrial Competitiveness) shall be programmed through specific calls for implementing the missions. For the remaining part of the programme, and only after a positive assessment of the mission selection and management process, this percentage may be increased. Most importantly, the missions will receive support over and beyond Horizon Europe funding. For missions to be successful, support and alignment from other European and national programmes will also be essential.

16. How are missions relevant to innovation and growth?

The EU missions will cross sectors and encompass activities from a broad range of Technology Readiness Levels (TRLs) with other forms of complementary measures such as adopting new standards or regulations, or developing new policy instruments to correct market failures. EU missions will crowd-in funding and private investments towards existing innovative markets, but also will spark the creation of new markets for European sustainable growth, improving the daily lives of Europeans.

17. How will missions be monitored?

Key Performance Indicators will be defined to monitor the progress of the missions towards short, medium and long-term targets. An assessment of missions shall take place no later than 2023, before any decision is taken on creating new missions, continuing, terminating or redirecting ongoing missions. The assessment's results shall be made public and shall include the analysis of their selection process and of their governance, budget, focus and progress to date. The Commission will present a report on the main findings to the Council and the European Parliament.

18. Can missions fail?

With missions being initiatives that are by design bold and ambitious comes the risk that some things might fail. There are plenty of safeguards in the design of missions to limit the chance of failure. Monitoring performance is key for the missions approach and this will tell us when to make adjustments if they are needed.

19. What is the difference between EU missions and European partnerships?

European Partnerships and EU missions are both instruments of the Horizon Europe framework programme, hence they share some features and goals. However, EU missions aim to foster solutions through a more bottom-up approach that is by mobilising citizens and stakeholders, as well as by mobilising actors well beyond science and innovation domain. European Partnerships are set up on the basis of memoranda of understanding or contractual arrangements between the Commission and the partners, and require ownership and long-term financial commitments from the partners. In principle, some partnerships may contribute to the achievement of some missions, for example by aligning parts of the partnerships' annual plans to relevant mission goals.

Annex: Mission references in the Horizon Europe legislation

Article 2(5) of the draft Horizon Europe Regulation

'mission' means a portfolio of excellence-based and impact-driven research and innovation actions across disciplines and sectors, intended to:

- achieve, within a set timeframe, a measurable goal that could not be achieved through individual actions,
- have impact on society and policy-making through science and technology, and
- be relevant for a significant part of the European population and a wide range of European citizens;

Article 7 of the draft Horizon Europe Regulation

1. Missions shall be programmed within the pillar 'Global Challenges and European Industrial Competitiveness ', but may also benefit from actions carried out within other parts of the Programme as well as complementary actions carried out under other Union funding programmes. Missions shall allow for competing solutions, resulting in pan-European added value and impact.

2. The missions shall be defined and implemented in accordance with the Regulation and the Specific Programme, ensuring the active and early involvement of the Member States and extensive exchanges with the European Parliament. The missions, their objectives, budget, targets, scope, indicators and milestones shall be identified in the Strategic Research and Innovation Plans or the Work Programmes as appropriate. Evaluation of proposals under the missions shall be carried out in accordance with Article 26.

2 a. During the first three years of the programme, a maximum of 10% of the annual budget of Pillar II shall be programmed through specific calls for implementing the missions. For the remaining part of the programme, and only after a positive assessment of the mission

selection and management process, this percentage may be increased. The Commission shall communicate the total budgetary share of each work programme dedicated to missions.

3. Missions shall

(a) using SDGs as sources for their design and implementation, have a clear research and innovation content, EU-added value, and contribute to reaching Union priorities and commitments and Horizon Europe programme objectives laid down in Article 3; (

a a) cover areas of common European relevance, be inclusive, encourage broad engagement and active participation of various types of stakeholders from public and private sectors, including citizens and end-users, and deliver research and innovation results that could benefit all Member States;

(b) be bold and inspirational, hence have wide, scientific, technological, societal, economic, environmental or policy relevance and impact;

(c) indicate a clear direction and objectives and be targeted, measurable, time-bound and have a clear budget frame;

(d) be selected in a transparent manner and be centred on ambitious, excellence-based and impact-driven but realistic goals and research, development and innovation activities;

(d a) have the necessary scope, scale and mobilization of the resources and leverage of additional public and private funds required to deliver the mission outcome;

(e) stimulate activity across disciplines (including Social Sciences and Humanities) and encompassing activities from a broad range of TRLs, including lower TRLs;

(f) be open to multiple, bottom-up approaches and solutions taking into account human and societal needs and benefits and recognizing the importance of diverse contributions to achieve these missions.

(f a) benefit from synergies in a transparent manner with other Union programmes as well as with national and, where relevant, regional innovation ecosystems.

4. The Commission shall monitor and evaluate each mission in accordance with Article 45, Article 47 and Annex V of this regulation, including progress towards short, medium and long-term targets, covering implementation, monitoring and phasing-out of the missions. An assessment of the first missions established under Horizon Europe shall take place no later than 2023 and before any decision is taken on creating new missions, continuing, terminating or redirecting ongoing missions. The results of this assessment shall be made public and shall include, but not limited to, the analysis of their selection process and of their governance, budget, focus and progress to date.

Areas for possible missions as defined in the ANNEX VI of the draft Horizon Europe Regulation:

Missions Area 1: Adaptation to Climate Change, including Societal Transformation

Mission Area 2: Cancer

Mission Area 3: Healthy Oceans, Seas, Coastal and Inland Waters

Mission Area 4: Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities

Mission Area 5: Soil Health and Food

Article 5 of the Horizon Europe Specific Programme Missions

1. Research and Innovation Missions may be established in the mission areas identified in Annex Va of the Regulation establishing Horizon Europe.

2. For each Mission Area, a mission board shall be established, unless existing advisory structures can be used, in which case the Programme Committee shall be informed in advance. The mission board shall be composed of a maximum of 15 independent high level individuals with broad expertise, including where appropriate SSH experts, from across Europe and beyond, including relevant end-users' representatives. The members of the mission boards shall be appointed by the Commission, following a transparent procedure for their identification, including an open call for expressions of interest. The Programme Committee shall be consulted on the identification and selection procedures, including the criteria used, in a timely manner. The term of office of mission board members shall be up to five years, renewable once.

3. The mission board shall advise, without having decision-making powers, the Commission upon the following:

(a) identification and design of one or more missions in the respective Mission Area according to the provisions and criteria as set out in Article 7 of [Framework Programme Regulation]

(b) content of work programmes and their revision as needed for achieving the mission objectives, with input from stakeholders and, where relevant, the public;

(c) characteristics of project portfolios for missions;

(d) adjustment actions, or termination if appropriate, based on implementation assessments according to the defined objectives of the mission;

(e) selection of independent expert evaluators following the provisions of Article 44 [of the Framework Programme Regulation], briefing of expert evaluators and evaluation criteria and their weighting;

(f) framework conditions which help achieve the objectives of the mission;

(g) communication, including on the performance and the achievements of the mission; (h) policy coordination between relevant actors at different levels, in particular regarding synergies with other Union policies;

(i) key performance indicators.

The advice of the mission boards shall be made public.

4. For each Mission Area, the Programme Committee shall be involved in the preparation and life cycle of the missions, taking into account relevant issues from the national context and opportunities to enhance alignment with activities on national level. Interactions with the mission boards shall take place in a timely and comprehensive manner.

5 The work programme provided for in Article 11 shall include for each mission identified in the Strategic Plan, the design, the characteristics of their project portfolios and specific provisions to enable an efficient portfolio approach.