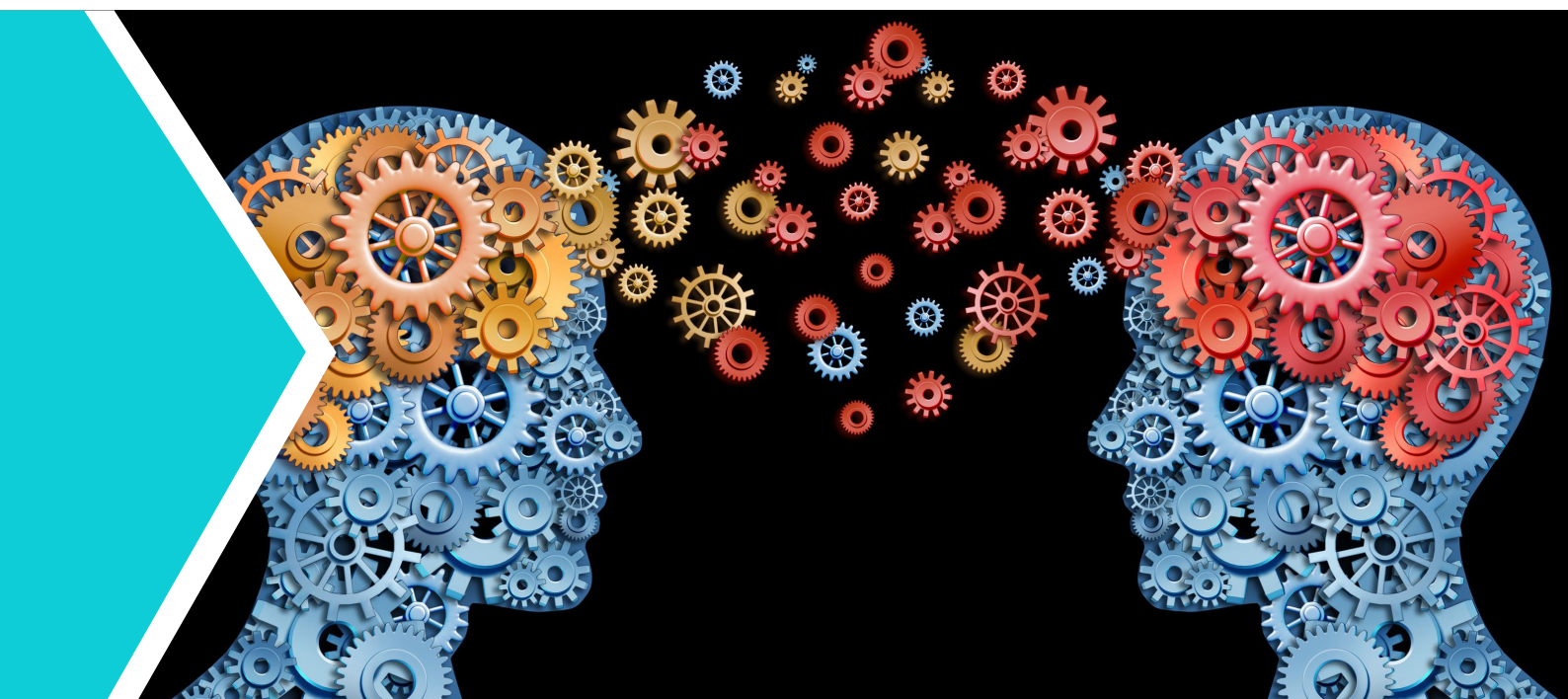




ENHANCING SYNERGIES for the next EU knowledge programmes

March 2019



Why is there a need for synergies between EU knowledge programmes?

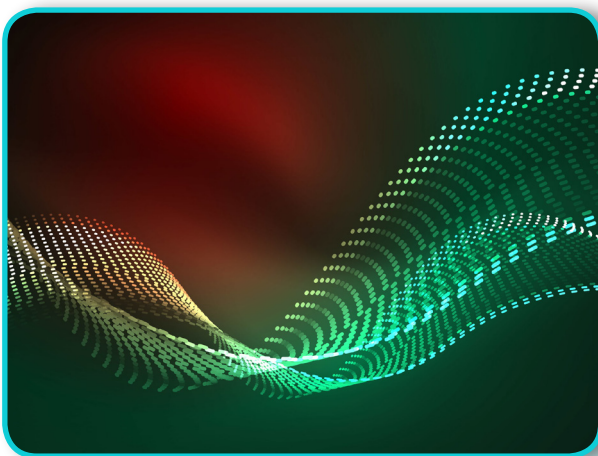
Different programmes serve different communities and through synergies between the programmes results can be widely disseminated to create more impact. Synergies will show where harmonisation and alignment are possible. This will also create more awareness and more possibilities for the use of multiple EU funds.

Building on Erasmus and Horizon, the European structural and investment funds (ESIF) can be used for capacity building in human capital and research and innovation. ESIF could be used to reach out to groups that can currently not benefit from Erasmus or Horizon because they do not have the budget or meet the applicable conditions.

Synergies between Erasmus and ESIF are essential because the two programmes are complementary. Erasmus can strengthen the region by providing young people with mobility opportunities and helping them gain the right skills set. Where Erasmus creates a critical mass, regional policy can create chances and opportunities (jobs) for this critical mass and thereby also address issues such as brain drain. ESIF could direct the positive outcomes of Erasmus by transferring the results into regional opportunities and developing innovative ecosystems.

The Research Framework Programme (FP) and ESIF are complementary, as the FP funds scientific research and ESIF can transfer the knowledge resulting from that research into the economy. The issue of brain drain can also be addressed through enhanced synergies between Horizon Europe and ESIF: since many excellent researchers are leaving their home countries because of a lack of facilities and the proper conditions to do their research.

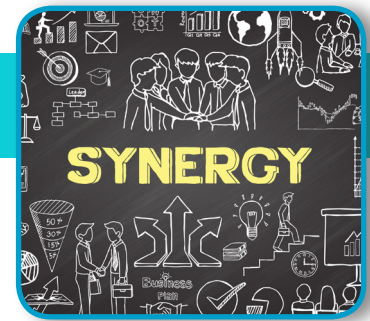
Aligning Horizon Europe and Erasmus will contribute to the objectives of EU education and research policy to create more impact and EU added value. The quality of both education and research can be improved by using the latest results and insights of projects from different programmes. Tomorrow's students and researchers will need different skills, and new ways of teaching and learning are necessary in this day and age. New areas of research should feed back into education. Education programmes should be developed around these emerging areas to ensure students obtain the right skills and knowledge. People need to be taught how to use the latest innovations. We have to ensure that Europe trains the next generation of talents and that we are able to attract the best researchers, teachers and students.



On 16 October 2018, the seminar 'Enhancing synergies for the next EU knowledge programmes' was organised and hosted by Neth-ER and MEP Caroline Nagtegaal. Creating more synergies between the various EU programmes, such as Horizon Europe, Erasmus and European structural and investment funds post-2020, is one of the main ambitions of the Commission and a wish of many stakeholders. The seminar addressed ways to reach this goal. Ms Nagtegaal underlined the importance of synergies in the next EU programmes from the perspective of the European Parliament.

This non-paper gives an overview of the main outcomes of the discussions, and aims to provide further suggestions and input to the EU institutions and other stakeholders.

Improving policy conditions for synergies



Improving policy conditions for synergies between EU knowledge programmes has four aspects: the role of the European Commission (EC) and Member States, the role of the National Contact Points (NCPs), the applicable rules, and communication.

Improving policy conditions for synergies between EU knowledge programmes can create more trust between directorate-generals (DGs) from the European Commission, between ministries within Member States, between Member States, and between governments, management authorities and local authorities. Within the Commission the DGs act as separate silos with their own responsibilities, budgets and focus. To achieve real synergies an overarching structure may be necessary (a separate DG for synergies or an extra task for the Secretariat-General). The Commission could organise targeted and focussed stakeholder consultations on how to improve policy conditions. These consultations should differ from the current broadly formulated consultations needed only as proof of good EU policy making.

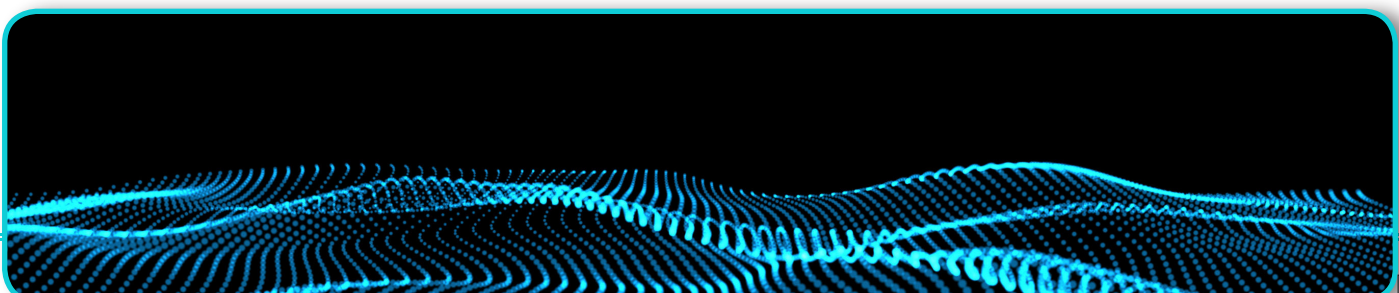
It could be profitable to create international practitioners' groups on synergies, in which experts from different backgrounds and nationalities and working with different EU (knowledge) programmes can come together regularly to provide input to EU institutions on how to improve synergies.

Preferably, Member States should establish national one-stop shops where potential applicants for EU programmes can find information about different options and different funding programmes.

Currently each programme has its own National Contact Point. NCPs need to have more information about the options available in other funding programmes so they can refer potential applicants to another adviser. Funding advisers within institutions should also receive more information about different EU programmes. Many higher education institutes (HEIs) have separate departments for education and research, and communication between the departments needs to be enhanced. There is a strong need for ambassadors/knowledge brokers at various levels (researcher, management, authorities) to promote the multiple possibilities already available. NCPs could be given such a role in connecting different EU programmes.

Efforts should be made to streamline rules between programmes and to make programmes simpler. The legal basis for synergies could be adjusted through conditionality, with both programmes being acknowledged within it. The timing of calls and requirements for consortia for different programmes need to be better aligned to make it easier to combine funding from the programmes. Mobility of researchers and staff should be a mandatory component within a cooperation project. Job rotation should be a habit more than an exception.

There is a clear need to enhance communication on the possibilities for synergies (through posters, info sessions and other forms of mandatory dissemination). More communication about the results of multi-funded projects makes it possible to find and invite unexpected partners (adding more flavours to the cooperation). Information sessions about synergies between the EU knowledge programmes could be organised regularly not only at local, regional and country level but also at EU level. These seminars would also bring the various actors together.



Ideas for synergies between EU knowledge programmes

The seminar 'Enhancing synergies for the next EU knowledge programmes' yielded many specific ideas and suggestions to obtain and improve synergies between ESIF, Erasmus and Horizon Europe.



ESIF and Horizon Europe

Synergies between ESIF and Horizon Europe could be enhanced by extending the use of the Seal of Excellence for different parts of Horizon Europe (such as the European Innovation Council), and by applying the rules of the Framework Programme for projects that have been awarded a Seal and are consequently funded by the ESIF. In addition, cooperation between regions across Europe on the basis of shared Research and Innovation Strategies of Smart Specialisation (RIS3) in Interreg can become stepping stones for building consortia for Horizon Europe projects. Moreover, ESIF can be used for training researchers to help them with their applications in the FP.

Concrete ideas for synergies between ESIF and Horizon Europe:

- The different national and regional authorities managing ESIF and those responsible for setting the research agenda should be brought together to align priorities for ESIF and the research agenda.
- Financial incentives could be provided by offering better co-financing rates to Member States that aim to achieve synergies. Such incentives are needed to connect Horizon and ESIF projects.
- Missions and partnerships are parts of Horizon Europe that could potentially enable synergies. When they are linked to the RIS3, the region could potentially participate. This will also incentivise a region to not only focus on ESIF, but also on the FP.
- NCPs could play a role in selecting excellent projects funded through ESIF and bringing regions with the same RIS3 together. The proposed Interreg component 5 (EC proposal) for interregional innovation investments based on shared RIS3, could help regions to integrate into the global value chain. Interreg programmes can thus become stepping stones for consortium building of public and private partners across Europe and can contribute to preparing proposals for the Framework Programme.
- Project results could be mapped in order to match Horizon and ESIF projects. In this way concrete synergies can be established through sequential combination of funding to enable the exploitation of the research and innovation results at national/regional level.



ESIF and Erasmus

Synergies between ESIF and Erasmus could be enhanced through new initiatives like the European Universities and the Centres of Vocational Excellence. ESIF could play a role in supporting the development of research infrastructures or in providing the connection with the regional strategy and partners in the region. Erasmus can support these initiatives by developing partnerships and offering opportunities for mobility. In addition, knowledge institutions could provide regions with information about successful Erasmus projects so that they can be taken into account and possibly scaled up with the support of structural funds.

Concrete ideas for synergies between ESIF and Erasmus:

- Knowledge institutions can facilitate and stimulate synergies in regional strategies and RIS3. Representatives from knowledge institutions should be included in monitoring committees that check the operational programmes for ESIF.
- National Agencies for Erasmus could be a part of the monitoring committees for regional policy.
- Strategic partnerships can be formed with different regions under Erasmus by connecting projects with regional priorities, thereby transferring knowledge into the region through Erasmus.
- Mobility opportunities in regional programmes, such as Interreg, can be created through Erasmus. When there is successful regional cooperation, Erasmus mobility can transfer knowledge into the region.

Horizon Europe and Erasmus

Synergies between Horizon Europe and Erasmus should mostly focus on capacity building of research and education, such as skills development, open science and open innovation skills, and the exchange of ideas and practices. Successful Horizon project results could be rolled out through the Erasmus partnerships for innovation in collaboration with all actors in the knowledge triangle. It should be possible for students to do internships in research institutes or research managers to do staff exchanges under the Erasmus programme. A short term mobility fund for researchers could be established within European Universities or Erasmus.

Concrete ideas for synergies between Horizon Europe and Erasmus:

- The digital opportunity traineeships serve as a good example for synergies between the programmes that could be used for other sectors lacking advanced skills.
- It should be possible to develop joint programmes in a similar discipline with a similar consortium at both bachelor's, master's and doctoral level. The bachelor's and master's level programmes can be funded through Erasmus, whereas the doctoral level programmes can be funded under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions (MSCA).
- The innovation actions in Horizon Europe, such as the European Innovation Council (EIC), should open up for students with innovative ideas. Students need to be involved in innovation activities and innovation boards.
- It should be possible for students to do internships in research institutes or research managers to do staff exchanges under the Erasmus programme.
- Currently it is difficult for organisations without the Erasmus Charter to have access to the programme. It should also be possible for non-higher education institutions, such as University Medical Centres or research institutes to have access to Erasmus calls.
- Research proposals need to include actions on feeding results back into education.

Colophon

This paper was drafted to support EU institutions during the negotiations for the next EU Framework Programme for research and innovation, Horizon Europe.

Neth-ER is a Brussels-based association of eleven Dutch organisations working in the field of education, research and innovation. Neth-ER looks forward to help shaping the future of EU research and innovation together with European institutions, national governments and stakeholder organisations.



Neth-ER members:

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Nuffic - Netherlands Organisation for the internationalisation of education
NWO - Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research
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