

European Partnership Stakeholder Forum

*20 years of European Partnerships:
Reflecting on the past – Shaping the Future*

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“The views and opinions expressed in this document are those of the individuals who contributed to the discussions during the forum and do not necessarily reflect the views, policies, or positions of the European Commission. “

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1. Executive summary

The third Partnership Stakeholder Forum was organised by the European Commission and ERA-LEARN and took place in Brussels, 4-5 December 2024. The event attracted more than four hundred participants in person and online. Ekaterina Zaharieva, Commissioner for Start-ups, Research and Innovation opened the event, while Giorgio Gori, MEP and Vice-Chair of the ITRE Committee and László Bódis, Deputy State Secretary for Innovation, representative of the Hungarian Presidency, gave the keynote speeches. This was followed by short introductory remarks of Pauline Rouch, Director of Directorate G. Fabienne Gautier, Head of Unit G.4 Missions and Partnerships from DG RTD, European Commission, moderated the event. The format of the forum included partnership pitches, panel discussions and parallel workshops, engaging participants in highly interactive set ups.

Setting the scene

Based on the recent [Draghi report “The future of European competitiveness”](#), the [Heitor Report ‘Align. act. accelerate’](#) and the new mandate of Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, it is clear that research and innovation are paramount as key drivers of progress. Closing the innovation gap is a central focus of the new political cycle that Europe is entering. To this end, supporting research and re-focusing on the 3% GDP target is important, as is the focus on cutting-edge technologies to put Europe in a leading position at the forefront of global innovation. Equally important is the goal of promoting gender balance and ensuring equal opportunities for all.

European Partnerships play a crucial role in linking research and innovation with the EU strategic objectives of green and digital transition and competitiveness. Strengthening the EU’s strategic autonomy is also highly relevant for European Partnerships. It is important that the added value of the European Partnerships is maintained in the future and that a substantially higher budget is advocated to achieve the 3% GDP target. While addressing the challenges they face, partnerships should remain a cornerstone of the strategy to strengthen Europe’s competitiveness focusing on fewer priorities and addressing innovation, policy and societal challenges.

Main achievements

The more streamlined approach adopted under Horizon Europe has not only attracted increased investment from both the participating countries and industries, but it has also strengthened alignment with national strategies, leading to clearer and more impactful outcomes. As

documented in the [BMR 2024](#), the total commitments to European Partnerships by actors other than the Union amount to almost €39 billions of which 59% is from industry (€23 billion¹).

The evolution of certain partnerships has also been remarkable having been launched in the early days of FP6 and achieving notable impact in their areas. Partnerships have been crucial in addressing urgent needs like those during the COVID-19 pandemic, when the sharing of data, rapidly shifting objectives and redirecting resources was paramount. The role of the partnerships has been pivotal both in reducing fragmentation of the research efforts and in guiding policymaking and alignment at the national and European levels, as well as in accelerating the transition from research and development to market-ready solutions. The main success story is the existence of the partnerships for over twenty years and the ever-increasing commitments and political support they attract. *The main factors for success have been the sharing of common goals, co-creating agendas and mobilising resources, ensuring transparency and building trust among truly dedicated people.*

Lessons learnt

Bringing the public and the private sectors together to work cohesively in the global context is key. The need for finding the right balance between flexibility and simplification is ever more pressing in order not to limit the full potential of the partnership instrument. Partnerships should have clear rules and support to enhance their pace and impact which varies from one thematic area to another. While the new framework is only now beginning to show its potential, it is important to simplify processes and avoid excessive rule change.

In the area of health, dealing with AI has been identified as an important topic as it creates issues in relation to trustworthiness, ethical and regulatory frameworks and data sharing. An *overarching AI strategy* needs to be developed, while secure, ethical data sharing practices are also paramount.

Close and continuous engagement of industry and more generally, the relevant stakeholders and end-users, are key factors for the success of a partnership. There is clear potential for *collaboration with EIT-KICs or the EIC* to support the follow-up of projects and prototypes with high innovation potential. Engaging with the venture capital sector may also be a step in the right direction.

Translating SRIAs into technology roadmaps is pertinent to progress down the line of innovation. *Joint road mapping is key to achieve impact.* A simple process to facilitate this, along with the fusion of different funding sources and collaboration with stakeholder communities, would be beneficial.

Synergies and collaboration among partnerships should be an integral part of any partnership work-programme. Several examples of effective synergies exist that are worth documenting and sharing among the partnership community. Platforms and formats that bring together both established and new actors are useful, while centralised support might also be beneficial.

¹ Interesting to note that of the €23 billion of the industry's commitments, €11 billion are allocated to the Chips JU and €7 billion to the EuroHPC i.e. 46% of the total industrial commitments.

Synergy-building, global engagement and creative outreach to underrepresented groups are key for reinforcing the role of partnerships as key drivers of systemic change.

Designing the partnerships

- Thematic focus: broad or narrow. *Deciding on the focus of a partnership depends on its long-term vision, goals, objectives and the impact it aims to achieve.* In exploring areas to address with partnerships, it is vital to consider the scientific and the foresight dimension, the commitment of relevant actors, potential for synergies, and attractiveness for industry.
- Identification of thematic priorities: bottom-up vs. top-down. A combined process is needed that is systematic, transparent and structured, building on knowledge, foresight expertise, political priorities, as well as industrial innovation needs. *A more impact-driven approach backed by strategic alignment between countries and the EU is key.*
- Justification for the partnership approach: added value. The *added value should be justified* by the capacity to collect funds, attract diverse stakeholders (inclusiveness), transmit political priorities through a bottom-up approach and interpret industrial needs.
- Coherence: synergy vs. overlap with existing initiatives. At the *candidate stage it is important to map existing activities and initiatives* also considering the TRL levels. While some overlap is normal at the topic level, it is crucial to delve deeper to *avoid overlaps at the activities level*, through both bottom up and top-down approaches.
- Stakeholder interest: targeted vs. inclusive participation. Open calls facilitate inclusivity, but limiting openness builds stronger communities and may reduce administrative burdens. *Partnerships should independently decide their openness and contribution models.*
- Implementation types. There are benefits and challenges in all types of partnerships (public-public, public-private, tripartite). 'One size fits none' but a *more flexible or modular approach* could be beneficial to be able to bring in all partners when we tackle the same challenges.
- Additional activities. They are important for exploiting the partnership potential beyond its role as a funding instrument. An *additional activities toolbox with clear instructions* would be helpful to address the lack of shared understanding and other implementation concerns.
- Implementation structures: common back office vs. individualised structures. There are benefits for a common back office, but also challenges coming from the different national rules, the risk of duplicating and added bureaucracy, etc. *The topic needs further discussion.*
- Life cycle: built-in exit vs. result-focused approach. Phasing out is addressed by partnerships in various ways. Allocating *additional time at the end of the partnerships* to focus specifically on designing the next steps (e.g. three years) would be useful.

The way ahead

Drawing on the [Draghi](#) and the [Letta reports](#) *Europe faces two major challenges*. The *innovation paradox* related to the failure to translate scientific advances into marketable innovations, and the *fifth freedom*, about enhancing research, innovation and education. Partnerships have proven their contribution to advancing the ERA, pooling resources and communities together to address common challenges. *The focus should now be on impact, knowledge valorisation and improving connections with the private sector.* The EIT-KIC model can serve as a role model but there is room for further connections with other structures, such as the European Innovation Council.

The EU also needs an *aligned strategy and roadmap* with clear references on what is done at the EU, the national and regional levels, taking also into account the threats and opportunities of engaging with third countries. Partnerships could also play a role as instrument of the EU foreign policy. The administrative burden in partnerships needs to be reduced, improving the portfolio approach and ensuring agility to adapt. *Openness and widening* participation should continue to be high on the agenda as should engaging with the regional level.

The identification process of (new) areas to address using the partnership instrument needs to be made clearer and *discussions on the partnership portfolio in the next framework programme should start now*. We need to understand the *role of the partnerships in the overall thematic fields* of the framework programme vis-à-vis other instruments. A *tailor-made administration framework* is also needed. Partnerships need further streamlining and consolidation to *address their transition from reliance on framework programme funding*. The EIT model targeting sustainability may also serve as an example here.

The PKH opinion is valuable in providing a vision followed by specific recommendations for the future.

2. Introduction

The aims of the third Partnership Stakeholder Forum were to:

- celebrate their 20 years' existence,
- highlight the achievements of the European Partnerships,
- address important challenges, and
- facilitate strategic discussions on the way to the 10th Framework Programme.

The Forum brought together the whole community of co-funded, co-programmed and institutionalised European Partnerships' stakeholders, including officials from national and regional governments, public funding agencies, the private sector and other science policy makers from all over Europe and beyond involved in the design and implementation of European Partnerships. In total, more than 400 participants attended the event in person and online.

The event was honoured by the first public appearance of the new Commissioner for Start-ups, Research and Innovation, Ekaterina Zaharieva, who opened the event, while Giorgio Gori, MEP and Vice-Chair of the ITRE Committee and László Bódis, Deputy State Secretary for Innovation, representative of the Hungarian Presidency, gave the keynote speeches, and Pauline Rouch, Director of Directorate G, giving an introduction to the event. Fabienne Gautier, Head of Unit G.4 Missions and Partnerships from DG RTD, was the moderator.

The format of the forum included plenary panel discussions, and parallel thematic workshops, that on the first day addressed topics from a thematic perspective. The topics of the thematic workshops were identified by the partnerships themselves based on a survey that was carried out before the event. Participants interested to contribute were also actively involved as speakers or discussants in the panels or the other formats of the workshops. The second day hosted discussions on cross-cutting themes like the building of the partnership portfolio for a more coherent and strategic partnership landscape, fostering simplification and effectiveness/efficiency and enhancing multi-actor collaborations for transformative resilience and long-term impact. The parallel workshops were organised in highly interactive set ups. The main achievements, key lessons learnt and important messages for the future were the themes addressed in the plenary sessions. Opportunities for networking were identified through a special matchmaking tool for the first time and a special area was dedicated to the resulting meetings. Partnerships were also invited to give pitch-talks. Four partnerships responded to the invitation including Innovative Health Initiative, Photonics, Sustainable Blue Economy and EIT Manufacturing.

This report summarises the key messages that were drawn from the discussions during the two days. Detailed documentation including the agenda of the event as well as the slides and video recordings are available on the ERA-LEARN website.²

² [European Partnership Stakeholder Forum 2024: 20 years of European Partnerships: Reflecting on the past – Shaping the Future — ERA-LEARN](#)

3. Setting the scene

On behalf of the European Commission, Fabienne Gautier,³ welcomed the participants and gave the floor to Ekaterina Zaharieva, new Commissioner for Start-ups, Research and Innovation that honoured the event with her first public appearance.

Citing Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, Commissioner Zaharieva noted that *“Closing the innovation gap is at the centre of the new competitiveness compass and it will guide the work of the new commission.”* Within this context she further specified the five priorities of her mandate. The first one is about strengthening the research eco-systems, that are the basis for long-term innovation capacity, by promoting attractive careers for researchers, ensuring cutting-edge infrastructure and a flow of talent and technologies. This will be the goal of the new European Research Area Act, that will also reinforce the 3% GDP target and promote better coordination of national research frameworks. *“Partnerships demonstrate that coordinated action delivers result”*, as noted by the Commissioner, who mentioned the example of the worldclass network of European supercomputers including three of the fastest in the world thanks to the EuroHPC partnership.

The second priority is stopping the innovation drain and increasing and improving access to capital. Increasing private investment in research and innovation is an inseparable goal to the 3% GDP target. Partnerships are already mobilizing almost € 39 billion in addition to the EU funding with 59% coming from industry (€ 23 billion). It needs to be ensured that research and innovation tools including partnerships are attractive to SMEs and startups. A startup and scale-up strategy will be presented next year supported by a dedicated forum.

The third priority involves a better focus in key technologies following the Draghi report recommendation. For partnerships this means strengthening their portfolio and avoiding duplications. *“While streamlining efforts on the horizon Europe was a step forward, we must ask ourselves: can a portfolio of 60 partnerships deliver the strategic alignment Europe needs today?”*

The fourth priority is an inclusive research and innovation Union by working on achieving gender balance in research and overcoming the structural barriers. This will be supported by an Action Plan on women in research and innovation initiatives ensuring safer workplace conditions, achieving gender balance in all Horizon related boards, working groups, evaluation committees and expert groups, and promoting gender research. The final priority is to deliver an ambitious successor to Horizon Europe. *“Partnerships have been a key tool for 20 years and I will ensure that they maintain a central role, but we must have the courage to change approaches when necessary. In particular, simplification will be a key priority.”* as noted by Commissioner Zaharieva,

³ Head of Unit G4 Common Missions and Partnerships service, DG RTD.

before closing her opening speech, thanking everyone and looking forward to working together with the partnership community.

Then followed two keynote speeches by Giorgio Gori, MEP and Vice-Chair of the ITRE Committee and László Bódis, Deputy State Secretary for Innovation, representative of the Hungarian Presidency.

Mr Gori acknowledged the value of the European Partnerships in linking research and innovation to policy needs, thus contributing to the EU strategic objectives, while tackling societal challenges, creating jobs and strengthening the resilience and competitiveness of European Industries, as well as in achieving EU strategic autonomy. The European Parliament is in favour of *“a reinforced role for the European Partnerships in the next framework programme”*. While working on a report assessing the implementation of Horizon Europe and giving recommendations for the next framework programme, the ITRE Committee strongly advocates for *“a substantially higher budget that would be sufficient for achieving the 3% GDP target and for better aligning the EU and national funding and policies”*. As Mr. Gori noted *“we need to work on ensuring administrative simplification, on openness, transparency and accessibility and to develop synergies and coordination by improving dedicated fora and meeting places for regular exchange like today's.”*

Mr. Bódis echoed the acknowledgement of partnerships not only as a testament of the power of collaboration, but also as a strategic cornerstone in addressing some of the most pressing global and European challenges. The European Partnerships have generated extensive discussions in the Competitiveness Council lately given their importance and ability to secure € 24.9 billion from Horizon Europe and € 38.6 billion from Member States or industry resources.

Three major merits can be identified for European Partnerships: their ability to generate enhanced long-term collaboration among public and private entities and to leverage resources to address common challenges that individual entities or Member States could not tackle alone; their ability to align research and Innovation efforts with strategic EU objectives, although the role as a policy instrument could be further emphasized; and their ability to mobilize significant financial commitments ensuring a critical mass of resources to support transformative research and innovation projects.

Three major challenges were marked: complex governance and setup, calling for more simplification and transparency; high levels of coordination, monitoring and reporting efforts that can impose administrative burdens on stakeholders, calling for simplified and harmonized rules and alignment of procedures including also the use of unified platforms; and, thirdly, varied participation of countries, with some playing more active roles, while others are still lagging behind. While taking further steps to realise a more balanced participation, partnerships should also focus on long-term financing, openness, impact and political commitment and avoid initiative proliferation and overlaps. In addition, there is an urgent need to share and use the results to maximize their societal impacts. M. Bódis concluded that *“continuing partnerships are crucial to address future European challenges. However, focusing on fewer priorities and fostering collaboration among policy, research and business could be key points for further discussions.”*

4. Main achievements and lessons learnt

The panel discussion⁴ that followed addressed the monitoring of partnerships, the main achievements and the major lessons to take for the future. The more streamlined approach in Horizon Europe has not only attracted increased investment from the participating countries as well as industry, but also strengthened alignment with national strategies, leading to clearer and more impactful outcomes. As documented in the [BMR 2024](#), the total commitments to European Partnerships by actors other than the Union amount to almost €39 billion, 59% coming from industry (€ 23 billion). Member States and Associated Countries have committed €15 billion, which is almost three times the €5.5 billion committed to joint calls in H2020 partnerships, including JPIs and self-sustained networks since 2014.

Partnerships are key instruments for coordinating research efforts and are becoming powerful drivers of progress. Examples of partnerships in the energy and mobility sectors were mentioned by panel members that are contributing to sustainability goals. For instance, the Clean Aviation Joint Undertaking, that has set the goal to deliver low carbon aircraft that can enter into service already in 2035, or the Clean Hydrogen Joint Undertaking with the 65 hydrogen valleys and the BATT4EU partnership supporting battery regulation compliance, the CCAM developing advanced automotive technologies, or the Zero-Emission Waterborne Transport partnership that is supporting demonstrators for zero-emission shipping by 2030 and managed to leverage €3 billion in advance of its mission.

The evolution of certain partnerships was also discussed as in the case of the Rare Diseases partnership that has been serving the needs of some thirty million people for almost 20 years since the first ERA-NET in FP6. Given that for 90% of these diseases, no treatment exists, or the treatment is not available in the countries of residence of these people, the partnership is making a tangible difference in the lives of patients. *Partnerships have also been crucial in addressing urgent needs as in the case of the COVID-19 pandemic*, when sharing of research and clinical data and rapidly shifting objectives and orienting resources to dealing with the arising needs was paramount.

The role of the partnerships has been pivotal both in reducing fragmentation of the research efforts and in supporting and guiding policymaking and alignment at the national and European levels, as well as in accelerating the transition from research and development to market-ready solutions. *The main success story is the actual existence of the partnerships for over 20 years and the ever-increasing commitments and political support.*

⁴ The panel members included Daria Julkowska, Chair of the former expert group for BMR 2024, Ute Gunsenheimer, Secretary General of the EOSC Association, Wolfgang Ballensiefen, Coordinator EP PerMed, DLR, and Rosalinde van der Vlies, DG RTD, Director, DIR. C.

Main factors for success have been the sharing of common goals, co-creating agendas and mobilising resources, ensuring transparency, and building trust around dedicated people.

The panel concluded with a last reflection on picking one key lesson learnt and on what the next 20 years would hold for European Partnerships:

Streamlining Partnerships: Reducing 120 partnerships to 60 was undoubtedly a challenging process, but the new framework is beginning to show its potential. These partnerships embody the true spirit of European collaboration. For example, while drug development traditionally takes a decade to reach patients, these partnerships can help expedite the process. We should enable them to do so—by maintaining fairness, simplifying processes and avoiding excessive rule changes.

The Need for Flexibility: Our fast-paced approach is outpacing the capacity of some projects, causing delays. Grant agreements remain rigid, relying solely on voluntary collaboration. This limits the full potential of the work being done. We need to address this to keep projects aligned and impactful.

Addressing Fragmentation: The partnerships have been instrumental in reducing fragmentation which is vital for fostering industry collaboration and accelerating the market entry of innovations. Simplification is key, as is ensuring flexibility to accommodate diverse partners. We should focus on leveraging the EU's strategic and competitive strengths to drive results and hasten deployment.

A Unified Voice: Through these partnerships, we speak as one, showcasing the EU's collective strength. We should empower them with the flexibility and support they need to thrive and further amplify the EU's influence and innovation on the global stage.

5. Issues facing partnerships discussed from a Cluster perspective

The parallel sessions of the first day were organised along the Clusters of Horizon Europe Pillar 2. The topics of the parallel sessions were defined beforehand together with the partnership community. This section summarises the views that were shared by the panellists and the participants in the parallel workshops.

5.1. *AI in healthcare and societal readiness and outreach - The Cluster 1 partnerships' perspective (A1).*

The goal of the session was to provide a platform for exchange on two topics suggested by the partnership stakeholders:

- Digital Health and AI in healthcare: Leveraging AI and digital tools to improve research, diagnosis, treatment, and prevention.
- Health and Societal readiness/ public engagement/ outreach activities (also: strategic & policy documents and briefs).

Three short presentations provided the context to the parallel session. The first presentation was on AI in healthcare, followed by two presentations from partnerships – the European Partnership on AI, Data and Robotics (ADRA) and ERA4Health partnership.

It is evident that we are living in a transformative era, where the integration of new AI technologies is reshaping various sectors. PubMed, the academic database, highlights the exponential growth of publications focused on AI in healthcare. AI's role in scientific research is evolving from merely being a tool to becoming a primary driver of discovery. This shift is underscored by the 2024 Nobel Prizes in Physics and Chemistry, awarded to AI pioneers John Hopfield and Geoffrey Hinton for their groundbreaking work in AI-related fields.

“With the increasing role of AI in today’s scientific research, celebrating influential past contributions alongside recent breakthroughs feels timely and justified. The five laureates exemplify how ideas from one field can profoundly impact another, inspiring researchers working at the intersection of science and computation.”⁵

Among the most pressing issues in AI and healthcare are trustworthiness, ethical frameworks, and data sharing. The medical community has expressed significant concern over the ethical implications of AI, particularly due to its dependence on vast amounts of data. The need for secure, ethical data sharing practices is paramount to ensure AI technologies can be safely and responsibly integrated into healthcare systems.

⁵ <https://www.nature.com/articles/s42256-024-00945-0>

The discussion evolved around understanding the need for AI in healthcare and the implications that AI has for the partnerships. AI is important in research, diagnosis, treatment and prevention for instance. While caution and scepticism are needed to address the immaturity of health data systems, we need to prepare internal strategies and frameworks for AI readiness. Harmonisation of regulation is key and needs to be addressed possibly through a special working group and dedicated workshops to help navigate and understand complexities of the AI Act, GDPR, and other relevant regulatory frameworks.

Integrating AI into project calls was also suggested, while addressing user-centric design from the start. The need for joint efforts was stressed to tackle regulatory issues and facilitate community-building. Last but not least, an overarching AI strategy needs to be developed, while secure, ethical data sharing practices are paramount to ensure AI technologies can be safely and responsibly integrated into healthcare systems.

The session also explored societal outreach and how this was implemented and organised. Societal outreach is beset with difficulties in relation to engaging the medical community, providing compensation for patient involvement and consistently integrating regulators and policymakers in the partnerships. In communicating effectively with stakeholders, it is important to prepare a joint narrative and find solutions to address the funding constraints for increased participation. Collaboration among partnerships for improved dissemination, as well as financial support and the training of patients, are also relevant, along with the integration of Responsible Research and Innovation in the partnership's operation.

The ERA4Health partnership shared their experience of integrating Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) in the partnership operation as well as in the funded projects. This includes both the elements of engaging users and addressing policy needs.

Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI)

- Specific Objective and dedicated section in our SRIA for **Implementation of RRI principles**.
- ERA4Health will promote research that **anticipates and assesses potential implications and societal expectations**, with the aim to foster a **true societal impact**.
- **Engage society and patients** in the definition of ERA4Health scope and activities (**Open consultations** and dedicated surveys)
- Support **gender equality**, research **ethically conducted** and promote **open access** and **FAIR data principles**.
- **Communicate and disseminate**, **in particular to decision makers**, research and innovation outcomes and citizen's and patients need for preventing, diagnosing and treating diseases.
- Include specific **RRI evaluation criteria** in our JTCs, **RRI experts** providing guidance, assessment and training and development of **RRI guidelines**.



ERA4Health: Patients & end-users involvement



➤ Including **Patient Representatives** as reviewers of the IICS calls proposals (PRP members) and specific evaluation criteria.

➤ Our funded projects are expected to integrate operational stakeholders and end users, to foster an impact in health strategies and policy recommendations:

*"Inclusion of an **early involvement of 'end users'** in the design of the study and in the research process, to ensure acceptability of the healthcare intervention and utility of the studies' knowledge for healthcare decision making"*

*"These types of pragmatic trials are a **key element for Health Technology Assessments (HTA)** and to assist decision-makers to promote value-based health care, **evidence-based health policies** and prioritize health interventions that have a substantial **public health impact.**"*

*"Operational stakeholders should ensure the **consortium's research is useful and translatable** to their (or other) organizational contexts. They could contribute by **influencing decision making** and creating changes within their organisations".*



Source: Cristina Nieto, Institute of Health Carlos III (ISCIII), Spain, introductory presentation A1

It is important to work on how to successfully translate R&I outputs into policy and better integrate the policy community. Specialised training would improve skills in outreach and engagement and a dedicated toolbox with suggested measures to facilitate policy engagement and implementation would be useful. Establishing a formal mechanism for sharing workshops, training and other opportunities (e.g., via ERA-LEARN) would be beneficial.

The overarching themes that the discussion revealed included:

1. Collaboration and sharing: A formal mechanism for sharing workshops, training, and other opportunities (e.g., via ERA-LEARN).
2. Strategic preparation for AI: Building ethical and regulatory frameworks to integrate AI responsibly into partnerships.
3. Policy integration: Bridging research, practice, and policy together through better tools and outreach strategies.
4. Harmonisation efforts: Addressing disparities in understanding and applying regulations for better coherence across initiatives

5.2. Responding to industry needs, developing a project portfolio and synergies – The Cluster 4 partnerships' perspective (A2).

The A2 session was structured around a panel discussion and interaction with the audience on three topics that the partnerships identified, as follows:

- Responding to the needs of the industry
- From SRIA to project portfolio
- Creating synergies among partnerships

The session started with a brief introduction of the data and the results about Cluster 4 partnerships included in the [BMR 2024](#). Cluster 4 partnerships present the highest level of cash commitments by partners other than the EU and together with the EIT-KICs, they are the major contributors to the Digital Transition goals. Despite the wide spectrum of application areas that are relevant for the Cluster 4 partnerships, the synergies with other partnerships or missions are still underdeveloped. The Cluster 4 partnerships are also highly relevant for strengthening the EU's strategic autonomy and very much focused on progressing research results towards innovation.

The introduction was followed by short interventions in relation to the topics addressed:

- Responding to the needs of the industry from the Metrology partnership
- From SRIA to project portfolio: Clean Steel partnership
- Creating synergies among partnerships: EIT manufacturing and Photonics partnership

Metrology is a key pillar of quality infrastructure and connections with industry is paramount. The Metrology partnership engages with industry on a regular basis (SRIA development, discussions with regulatory and standardisation bodies, identification of the needs of industry in terms of measurement). Given the cross-cutting nature of the metrology research, the partnership has close connections with other partnerships like Made in Europe, Chips JU, Clean Hydrogen JU, etc.

The Clean Steel partnership builds a project portfolio based on the SRIA vision and areas of intervention which are then complemented by identified technological building blocks starting from more mature technologies (i.e. with high TRL levels). The portfolio also includes four large demonstration projects. It is important to update the SRIA half-way through the lifetime of the partnership. Clean Steel enjoys close links to Clean Hydrogen, Processes4Planet and Made in Europe.

The EIT-KIC community has given particular emphasis in cross-KICs synergies. EIT Manufacturing closely interacts with EIT Digital, EIT Health, EIT Food, etc. The close collaboration with EFFRA was presented as a particular example of designing together the [Innovate Together programme](#), which identifies projects and prototypes that have the largest innovation potential and supports the project partners to apply to EIT Manufacturing to accelerate the commercialisation and applicability of the prototypes.

The collaboration of the Photonics partnership with other partnerships as well as with industry was another example. Photonics have been launching joint calls with Made in Europe and has helped the photonics industry team up with other industries through the preparation of joint white papers. The involvement of the industry was noted as important. This needs to be addressed from the start in the SRIA development phase. Involving the venture capital sector is also useful to help companies start up and scale up.

The discussion acknowledged that it is important to involve industry in the SRIA development as well as having regular input to the operation of a partnership via specific structures and processes. Close and continuous engagement of industry and more generally, the relevant stakeholders and end-users are key factors for the success of a partnership. It is also important to put more emphasis on synergies that help the follow-up of projects with promising results

and knowledge valorisation. Collaboration with the European Innovation Council is paramount in this regard. The lack of additional funding to create synergies was also discussed. Creating synergies should be an integral part of any partnership work-programme, rather than an add-on element that might lack the necessary resources. Several examples of effective synergies exist that are worth documenting and sharing among the partnership community.

5.3. Partnership governance, impact, synergies and internationalisation – The Cluster 5 partnerships' perspective (A3).

Energy and mobility lie within the core of modern societies. In the eve of the 21st Century, climate change has risen as one of the main challenges for upcoming years. The Cluster aims to develop innovative solutions to make European industries and value chains, with a focus on energy and transport sectors more climate and environment-friendly, smarter, safer and more resilient, while optimizing their efficiency and competitiveness

Due to the multifactorial realities affecting the three sectors of the Cluster (climate, energy, and mobility) and the different approaches of the partnership experience, the session was intended to exchange experiences and solutions, share success stories and try to co-create solutions to optimize the impact of the partnerships.

The session included a panel discussion and interaction with the audience as follows:

- From SRIA to project portfolio. Improve partnership governance, relation with Member States and COM and procedural aspects of the partnership coordination.
- Key factors for achieving impact: from the work program and calls to success stories
- Creating synergies among partnerships.
- Threats, needs and opportunities for collaboration with third countries

In relation to the SRIA development, there is high value in bringing together the diverse communities of climate, energy and mobility, to facilitate discussion and develop joint SRIAs through participative processes. The large and diverse ecosystems that support the process from SRIA to projects, such as in the topic of mobility, lead to more purposeful projects that involve the most important players for systemic innovation. Yet, participative processes are time consuming. Translating SRIAs into technology roadmaps, work programmes and concrete projects in a participative approach requires time. Thus, there is a demand for capacity building for stakeholder participation.

The panellists highlighted that on the way to achieve impact, participation of diverse stakeholders serves as a de-risking factor that ensures that the partnership goals are aligned with all relevant interests. Hence, overcoming fragmentation has been mentioned as an impact. Further, developing roadmaps with a systemic view (tech, economic, ecologic, regulatory, societal aspects) helps to harmonise the timing and goals of R&D processes of different organisations to accelerate the innovation processes. Joint road mapping is key to achieve impact. A simple process to facilitate this and the collaboration with other communities, would be beneficial. Participants also see an opportunity to increase impact through fusion of different funding sources (LIFE-programme, alignment with national funding etc.).

Europe's collective effort towards climate-neutral aircraft



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Source: Bruno Mastantuono, Clean Aviation presentation

Synergies began to be formed in Cluster 5 partnerships from the outset, with joint conferences and joint coordination groups leading to joint programming activities and roadmaps. To name some examples, synergies were created thematically (e.g. joint roadmapping, common enabling technologies), or structurally by holding joint conferences, coordination groups (e.g. CCAM/2ZERO), or programme activities (e.g. with a Mission, at national and regional levels or with other international organisations). A holistic framework approach is required, though, for raising synergies across partnerships through the elaboration of cross-partnership plans, that could be promoted by the EC. Clustering of projects of different partnerships could be another way to increase synergies. Concerns were raised about achieving synergies within and between associations, as implementing them remains a challenge. Partnerships should address this issue from the outset, particularly when tackling ambitious goals. Additionally, it was suggested that regions should have seamless access to all partnerships, given their expertise in specialized fields.

The power of our synergies



Source: 2Zero Partnership presentation

Internationalisation and collaboration have significantly improved in recent years, as seen in joint initiatives involving different actors (e.g. Mission Innovation), but also regarding collaboration in technological advancement. Such efforts enable the development of global solutions to address challenges such as the climate crisis. By fostering international cooperation, European Partnerships remain competitive in global markets, exemplified by making use of trilateral working groups.

Panellists emphasized the importance of considering the threats, needs, and opportunities associated with collaboration with third countries. They agreed that each partnership requires a tailored approach, influenced by factors such as the state of technology in the EU and abroad, the geographical region or country involved, and the technology readiness level (TRL) of the projects. For example, expertise in autonomous vehicles outside Europe, particularly in the US and China, provides valuable insights for the EU. However, while leveraging such expertise, the EU must also safeguard its own interests. Similarly, mutual learning exercises and training exchanges in competitive areas like hydrogen should focus on mutually beneficial topics.

China was highlighted as a key partner in scientific and technological collaboration, but such engagement should be based on long-term, balanced benefits. In the aerospace sector, collaboration often aligns with common interests but remains competitive with other regions, adding complexity to partnerships. This complexity is further exemplified by cases such as the UK's full membership in certain EU initiatives despite no longer being an EU member, reflecting the evolving nature of global collaboration.

5.4. *Joint activities, stakeholder engagement and partnership implementation – The Cluster 6 partnerships’ perspective (A4).*

Session A4 provided a platform for exchange on concrete needs shared amongst partnerships in Cluster 6. A world café was set up around four topics:

- Joint activities between partnerships: running joint calls; other joint activities including alignment, clustering of projects, broader impacts (data schemes for better European transnational monitoring, digitalization etc.), etc.
- Stakeholder engagement: approaches across the three project stages: proposal, implementation and post-project.
- International cooperation and enlargement: approaches for effective enlargement, partnership sizes, newcomers involvement.
- Partnership implementation aspects: organizing co-funded calls (including interacting with the EC), Grant 2nd phase application, Life cycle approach)

Joint activities

Regarding joint calls, there was a consensus that they are still an objective, although it has become challenging under Horizon Europe due to the lack of a unique management network and the long time needed to negotiate the processes.

As an alternative to joint calls, various activities concerning projects were mentioned. SRIAs can be updated in a more coordinated way. Separate calls can also be better aligned by cross-checking contents, to avoid duplication. Other possibilities include project clustering, setting up joint living labs, or collaborating on data sharing, or joint monitoring activities (for instance on monitoring of environmental indicators). Clustering of projects can involve more than partnership-funded projects, including for instance, projects funded through different European instruments (such as Interreg, MSCA). Applying a fast-track ‘seal of excellence’ approach was also deemed necessary to fund high-quality applications that are side-lined in partnership calls due to lack of national funds. Joint communication actions such as info days, conferences, or joint policy briefs are also meaningful.

In relation to the partnership governance, cross-participation in bodies of other partnerships was quoted as a relevant practice. Nominating dedicated contact points was also mentioned as good practice to foster cooperation. It was highlighted that partnerships need to know each other to identify respective strengths and potential complementarities. The example of Made in Europe and the EIT Manufacturing working together was quoted complementing each other in research and market uptake. AI or other data analysis tools might be useful to help analyse SRIAs or partnerships portfolios to identify areas for collaboration.

Challenges were also discussed and referred to the lack of resources and time for organising and implementing joint activities. Following several stakeholder boards can be time-consuming and logistically challenging for individuals. As for joint work on data, mapping what is already available and what can be added is also time-consuming. While collaboration within the same type of partnership (e.g. Co-funded) might be easier, working across different partnership types is more challenging due to the divergences in the way they work.

There was a clear call for sharing best practices and tools to save time in working on synergies and joint activities. Regular meetings between partnerships, or even the creation of a Cluster 6 taskforce may help in this regard. Repositories of documents from other partnerships (such as guidelines), or answers to questions from Executive Agencies or the EC could also be shared. ERA-LEARN could update and/or extend its resources for this purpose. ERA-LEARN could play a coordination role, and the role of the PKH should be strengthened in this regard. The EIT community model was also quoted as an example of sharing tool and pooling resources.

Stakeholder engagement

Stakeholder engagement plays a pivotal role in fostering trust, collaboration, and achieving successful project outcomes. To develop effective engagement strategies, continuous communication is essential for keeping stakeholders informed and encouraging ongoing feedback. Additionally, trust-building through collaborative approaches is crucial to ensure smooth project implementation and transition from one phase to another where relevant. The use of key tools for stakeholder engagement is highly important. These may include for instance:

- *Forums and Networking Platforms*: Facilitate real-time exchange of information among stakeholders.
- *Regional Workshops*: Focus on localized input by engaging community-level stakeholders.
- *National Coordination Systems*:
 - Align priorities and resources during preparation phases.
 - Require inclusion in partnership budgets.
 - Benefit from representation in governing bodies.
- *Policy Briefs*: Provide clear guidelines for stakeholder-informed project development.
- *Living Labs*: Integrate stakeholders in demonstration activities to drive innovation.
- *Support for Co-funded Projects*:
 - Tailored guidelines and provisions in calls for proposals.
 - Evaluation criteria to incentivize stakeholder engagement.

Tailored consultations with stakeholder groups can be useful in addressing the needs of businesses, institutions, and citizens. Stakeholder committees can ensure sustained involvement throughout all phases of the project. The early involvement of stakeholders at the project's inception stage ensures alignment with their needs, enhances project relevance and acceptance, and strengthens stakeholder ownership of the outcomes.

A specific challenge involves difficulties in engaging the private sector due to funding constraints, as well as limited participation from citizens or specific user groups (e.g. farmers). Possible solutions include fostering collaborations with organisations specialised in citizen engagement and involving experts from the social sciences and humanities to provide interdisciplinary input. Regarding sustainability, fostering relationships with potential investors can help ensure the viability of projects beyond their initial phases while enhancing scalability.

International collaboration and enlargement

The discussion evolved around the pros and cons, the opportunities and the challenges of increasing the number of partners and/or enlarging the partnerships across new countries (within and beyond the European borders). The advantages of internationalisation and enlargement include the possibility to involve underrepresented countries and regions, the widening of the sources of funding, the diversification of the risks, opportunities to learn from the diversity, creating economies of scale of the global value chain, and benefitting from the development aid in opening the partnerships to the developing countries.

However, there are difficulties associated with the internationalisation and enlargement process. These have to do with cultural and institutional barriers, the associated more complex administration, the difficulty to manage a significantly large structure possibly with more governance layers and more difficulties for the smaller partners to exert their power, higher risks of inequalities of the different sources of funding, and the limited funding capacity of new potential partners.

Drawing on the experiences gained so far, the importance was highlighted of the enlargement of the partnerships towards North African partners in Cluster 6 (relevance of the African continent for the global chain of food and for the international relationships). The challenges faced included difficulties in effectively releasing funds or ensuring the planned flow of funding during the course of projects, as well as political issues. The efforts of engaging some Latin American countries failed due to the lack of commercial agreement with the EU, while the experience of enlarging partnerships towards Eastern Europe countries (e.g. Georgia, Ukraine, Albania, Montenegro) may also be facing institutional barriers.

Solutions are needed in relation to facilitating the involvement of non-EU countries not to lose valuable opportunities, while also finding ways to manage the differences and diversity, create synergies among partners, and attract the big global actors while strengthening the smaller players.

Partnership implementation aspects

The challenges facing partnerships with regards to their implementation were discussed in detail. These include, for instance, the proposal templates or the grant/consortium agreement models that are unsuitable for the co-funded partnerships as they are not traditional Horizon Europe projects. The Funding and Tenders Portal is not suitable either for more than 100 participants that a partnership may have as members. The selection of the projects should also be adjusted to allow selection of projects jumping places in the ranking list so that the available budget from all funding agencies is utilised. The idea presented was to rank the projects in groups with the same scores so that it is possible to pick different projects from the groups to maximise the utilisation of the funding from all funding agencies. A similar practice is applied in an informal way by some of the partnership that tend to favour, where possible, ex aequo not to lose available funds. Different activities may run across different budgets and phases of a partnership. This duplicates the reporting and financial management burden.

Issues related to conflict of interest deriving from the participation of both research funding and research performing organisations in co-funded partnerships do not seem to have been solved yet. The inconsistent allocation of the EC contribution also created concerns, and the funding rate of 30% is considered insufficient for the additional activities and for covering the

management of a partnership. At the same time, oversubscription needs to be managed more effectively by finding a balance between the low competition present in the first calls and the increasing competition in subsequent calls. Clarity about the definition and eligibility of in-kind contributions and additional activities is also missing. The lack of human resources for the management of the partnerships was also repeated especially for the smaller country/members as well as the lack of knowledge.

Concluding, all participants plead for revising the existing tools, templates and models to reflect the actual nature of a co-funded partnership instead of a Horizon Europe project. They expressed willingness to be offered training and tools, especially for newcomers, on the mechanism of implementing a partnership. This would accelerate the time they need to be fully involved and would also facilitate engagement of regions and less-represented countries. A single-entry point was considered valuable. This can be based on in the ERA-LEARN website, where a call calendar already exists, although, not including the calls of the co-programmed partnerships as they are part of the Horizon Europe work-programme.

6. Selecting and designing the partnerships of the future FP

The parallel sessions B1-B3 on the second day addressed important topics for the future such as the development of a coherent partnership portfolio reflecting the strategic priorities of the EU, the improvement of the instrument responding to the need for simplification and effectiveness/efficiency, and the achievement of multi-actor collaborations for transformative resilience and long-term impact. This section summarises the views that were shared by the panellists and the participants in the parallel workshops.

6.1. *Partnership portfolio building: how to develop a coherent and strategic partnership landscape? (B1)*

Effective portfolio building should be central to selecting thematic topics for partnerships, ensuring they remain adaptable in a dynamic landscape and enable a strategic allocation of resources. Without well-defined criteria, a bottom-up approach risks an overabundance of initiatives, leading to legacy issues (repeated or similar thematics across Framework Programmes), overlaps, and potential gaps in unmet needs. Currently, no objective, measurable criteria exist to substantiate that a European Partnership is the optimal mechanism to address specific thematic needs.

This breakout session was structured as an interactive, collaborative design exercise aimed at rethinking the methodology to build a coherent and fit for purpose portfolio of European Partnership. Participants worked together on the following dimensions of portfolio building:

1. Size of partnership theme: Broad vs. Focused
2. Identification of thematic priorities: Bottom-up vs. Top-down
3. Justification for the partnership approach: Added Value
4. Coherence: Synergy vs. Overlap with existing initiatives
5. Stakeholder interest: Targeted vs. Inclusive participation

Each group explored both the pros and cons of their assigned dimension and translated these insights into specific criteria for effective portfolio development.

Size of partnership theme: Broad vs. Focused

A broad thematic area allows flexibility in relation to the types of partners that will be involved and the sub-areas of research that will be addressed within the theme. This is important for more advanced technological areas and wider eco-system changes. It is also possible to address wider issues on a large-scale within a broad theme and easier to establish synergies with other partnerships. On the other hand, a broad theme implies complex governance and management, given the multiplicity and different types of partnership members, and might not be favourable for

smaller organisations given the limited funding and resources available. Formulating calls around a broad research agenda can also be challenging, and there is a risk of similar calls being created year on year. Partnerships should start with a broader focus in the SRIAs and then focus on specific topics in the calls.

Addressing a more focused thematic area has the benefit of the strategic direction and allocation of resources. A focused thematic area will deliver a higher impact and can address specific problems of a sector in a more efficient and effective way. Narrowly defined topics contribute to the defragmentation of certain fields as competitors will actually be pushed to collaborate. Researchers would also find it easier to identify their interests in a more focused area, while evaluating proposals, outputs and impacts of the research should be more streamlined and straightforward compared to a broad thematic area. However, there may be resourcing challenges due to the relative lack of flexibility that accompanies a narrower theme, and lack of diversity due to fewer partners available as a result of the greater specialisation requirement. Narrow themes might become obsolete (either from a technology or policy point of view) in the lifetime of the partnership and also face the risk of exclusion of certain members states or types of organisations as a result of the specialised focus, not favouring widening or less advanced countries.

Regarding the criteria to determine whether a partnership theme should be expansive or specific, it was noted that each partnership instrument should have its own set of criteria. Some examples were identified including

- The theme should address both scientific and policy related concerns.
- The theme should have strong sectoral focus and the impact expected on this sector should be taken into consideration.
- The level of synergy that can arise as a result of a theme, either broad or focus, being addressed should be taken into account.
- The level of industry appetite at the time of devising the theme, but also when the outcomes of the research come to fruition, should factor in the decision of whether the theme should be broad or focused.
- The long-term vision of the partnership, that need to survive changing policy objectives, and the associated goals and expected impacts. All these need to be closely aligned as the guiding framework of the thematic area.

Identification of thematic priorities: Bottom-up vs. Top-down.

A bottom-up approach in the identification of the thematic areas that should be addressed by the partnership instrument is more transparent to the stakeholders and the partnership community. On the other hand, the bottom-up process may face challenges in finding common ground given that different thematic areas may be represented by large and usually fragmented stakeholder groups.

The top-down approach, usually informed by foresight and strategic priorities, would provide a predefined thematic framework under which the different national policy priorities can be aligned. Yet, this depends on a sound prioritisation, which requires a sufficient overview of the thematic stakeholder landscape, which is often lacking.

To design the identification process to ensure transparency but also strategic alignment, the first layer of the process should be top down to reflect the strategy, and a second, bottom-up layer should be strengthened. The process should be systematic, transparent and structured, building on knowledge, foresight expertise, political priorities, as well as industrial innovation needs. A more impact-driven approach backed by strategic alignment between countries and the EU is key. Certain drawbacks need to be overcome. Currently Member States have little say in the process. Communication should be improved in the future and adequate time should be allocated.

Justification for the partnership approach: added value.

Partnerships have a clear added value in terms of efficiency and efficacy of research and innovation policy at EU and national level. The partnership approach is synergistic with every actor bringing in their needs and priorities in a collective set up. They guarantee the widest capacity of collecting funds due to their scale and the high variety of stakeholders involved. They have showed a strong capacity of structuring the research and innovation field in Europe and they reflect an efficient way to bring the industry needs in the public policy discourse. Their networking effect is significant and long-term and they have the capacity to orient the national priorities and agendas towards jointly defined goals. The partnerships have acquired a certain prestige and are recognized by policy institutions at both the national and EU levels.

In line with their strengths, the criteria to justify their added value includes the capacity for collecting funds and attracting diverse types of stakeholders (inclusiveness), the capacity for transmitting the political priorities through a bottom-up approach and interpreting the industrial needs.

Coherence: synergy vs. overlap with existing initiatives.

At the candidate stage it is important to map existing activities and check the landscape of the ongoing initiatives (beyond the partnerships, i.e. Horizon Europe pillar 2 and other initiatives) considering the TRL level. While some overlap is normal at the topic level, it is crucial to delve deeper to avoid overlaps at the activities level, through both bottom-up and top-down approaches. Organisations and other involved stakeholders should propose topics related to their needs.

Nevertheless, there must be a superior level at which synergies and overlaps with other ongoing initiatives are checked. Building up on what already exists is important, and working constantly in close contact is essential to maximise synergies, not only at the candidate stage. Trust building is also key among partnership members, and once obtained it has to be sustained as it provides additionalities for participating in partnerships and is essential to maximise synergies.

The view was also expressed in Sli.do that the overlap with existing initiatives should not be asked at the partnership candidate stage but should be carefully addressed in a portfolio approach at the programme level. All related initiatives should be integrated under a specific portfolio backed by an overarching policy framework which oversees and facilitates synergies. The element of synergies should be embedded in the design and work-programme of a candidate partnership and adequately resourced, rather than just a wish list that might be difficult to realise due to inadequate resources and planning.

Stakeholder interest: Targeted vs. Inclusive participation.

When establishing and managing partnerships several key considerations emerge. Relevance is crucial in attracting and retaining stakeholders and while being open to all can foster inclusivity, it is the financial contributions that can ensure dedicated engagement, balancing openness and true interest. While open calls work for inclusivity, limiting openness in partnership activities builds stronger communities and reduces administrative burdens.

Partnerships should independently decide their openness and contribution models. Grant agreements and annual work plans should allow flexibility to adapt, including adding/removing partners and reallocating activities. Greater flexibility ensures that partnerships can respond to changes and remain effective, and by balancing inclusivity, commitment, and flexibility, partnerships can address diverse stakeholder needs and administrative constraints.

6.2. *Instrument design: how to foster simplification and effectiveness/efficiency? (B2)*

The current typology of partnership instruments is based mainly on a hard delineation between what are three different approaches to practical implementation of long-term and strategic cooperations. Still, the primary activity of all the different types of partnerships is mainly joint transnational calls, complemented with a range of additional in-kind activities. It has become clear throughout Horizon Europe that there is a continuous issue with the consistency and complexity in implementation and clarity in the delineation of the scope for individual partnerships. They might also not always offer the necessary flexibility for partners to engage in ambitious joint programmes.

This breakout session was structured as an interactive, collaborative design exercise aimed at rethinking partnership instruments to enhance simplicity and effectiveness by design. The following topics were discussed in terms of pros and cons and what could be actionable recommendations for the designing of the instrument.

1. Implementation types: public-public & public-private vs. tripartite partnerships
2. Additional activities
3. Implementation structures: Common back office vs. individualised structures
4. Life cycle: built-in exit vs. result-focused approach

Implementation types. All of the different types of partnerships fulfil their specific purposes and each type has several benefits and challenges. While the implementation is still quite complex and needs rethinking, a more flexible or modular approach could be beneficial to be able to bring in all partners when we tackle the same challenges. Yet, we do still need to remember that 'one size fits none'.

Public-public and public-private partnerships are considered to complement each other. Public-public partnerships work well on basic research or on important societal topics, while public-private partnerships can facilitate applied R&D in order to prepare implementation or deployment. However, public-public partnerships cannot afford larger industry involvement when it is needed to achieve certain impacts. Although taking the views of the private sector is always important, it was agreed that in the earlier phases of research it is good that Member States remain at the core of the partnership governance. Public-private partnerships could miss the alignment with national strategies to increase the impact. The setting up of both the two types is a complex and time-consuming process.

On the other hand, tripartite partnerships were valued as a suitable instrument to achieve alignment and were described as particularly relevant to cover a complete value-chain (the Chips JU was quoted as an example). Although they should not be the standard, they are a very relevant option in some cases. However, they can exclude certain members. Calls with only one grant for a large budget require the project participants to be in the “right” consortium, and there is no possibility for an organisation to join if the relevant country is not a member of the partnership.

Concluding, it was agreed that the three types allow flexibility already, and funders can find the right type for a specific innovation challenge. All the three partnership types are needed. However, deciding for one type sometimes excludes other important partners. An idea is to design a large partnership for a wider framework topic with sub-networks for specific topics. This allows flexibility and modularity to choose one of the three types at a certain time of the innovation process to enable different stakeholder groups to join and actively contribute depending on the phase of the innovation process. This could avoid overlaps of different partnership types working in similar topics. At the same time, the reintroduction of a simple bottom-up partnership type like the previous ERA-Nets was also suggested in Sli.do.

Additional activities. There is no common understanding of what additional activities are, especially across the different partnership types. They are, however, important for exploiting the partnership potential beyond its role as a funding instrument, as they can contribute to achieving strategic alignment, policy and societal impact. As an example, alignment of national programmes, thematic annual programming or monitoring, are key additional activities for the co-funded partnerships with high EU added value, while it is key for Joint Undertakings to carry out activities that cannot be covered by IKOP⁶ in relation, for instance, to the dissemination and exploitation of research results and sustainability of key project outcomes.

Yet, there are concerns about the eligibility and reporting as well as the funding model of additional activities, with the “black box” that existed in the past being considered easier by some. A toolbox including a collection of examples of additional activities with clear instructions about implementation would be helpful. The partnerships could then decide what type of additional activities are relevant for them to apply.

⁶ In-kind contributions to operational activities.

Implementation structures: common back office vs. individualised structures.

Having a common back-office to support the implementation of the partnerships is more cost-effective, provides more clarity about the different tasks and responsibilities, and through e.g. a common application system and associated guidelines and standardisation, it may lead to increased quality of tasks.

However, it may face serious challenges stemming from the different national rules that exist across countries, the diverse needs of the different partnerships, the additional resources required (funds, time, human resources), the resulting duplication of certain processes (e.g. reporting to back-office, reporting within the partnership), the additional bureaucracy, and the loss of the flexibility that exists today between administration tasks and additional activities. Given the diversity of the partnerships the back-office needs to be a large umbrella to cover all the diverse needs.

The features or governance mechanisms that should be considered to optimise and incentivise the use of common or tailored implementation structures raise a number of questions: “Should there be some kind of steering committee for the back office?”, or “Should partnerships have the option to step out from the back-office when they are not satisfied with the service provided?”. Efforts might be worthwhile to further explore the specific option as the topic needs further discussion.

Life cycle: built-in exit vs. result-focused approach.

The obligation in Horizon Europe to come out with a phasing out strategy is addressed by the partnerships in very different ways. It should not be a tick box exercise for the partnerships but a real reflection on the future. Yet, it can be a complex process as there is a lack of guidance. It is important to give enough time for the partnerships to unfold. Allocating additional time at the end of the partnerships to focus specifically on phasing out and the strategic next steps (e.g. three years in addition to the seven years for a co-funded partnership) would be useful and allow a more focussed approach to this phase of the partnership.

A results-driven approach to partnerships would require stronger reporting procedures and outputs to build the case for the continuation of the partnership and the achievement of key goals. However, it might create additional administrative burden on the partnerships.

Overall, there is a need to find a balance between simplification and flexibility, to allow to take into account the specificities of the different partnerships and the different communities that they bring together, as well as their different objectives.

6.3. *Multi-actor engagement: purpose and value, approaches and challenges, robustness and adaptability (B3)*

Meaningful collaboration with stakeholders is among the key priorities for European Partnerships. It matters at every step, from initiating the partnership and developing SRIAs, and further in ensuring sound governance and implementation to achieve long-term impacts. Engaging multiple actors is also critical for enabling broader sustainability transitions (Matti et al, 2023⁷) and ensuring resilience under uncertainty and change.

Effective engagement requires an ongoing dialogue and consideration of specific needs, so to decide on whom to engage, how and when. As highlighted by the recent interim evaluation of Horizon Europe, while European Partnerships have managed to engage diverse stakeholder groups, there is still scope for enhancing consideration of diverse needs and making use of collaborations to scale impact (European Commission, 2024a⁸).

The session brought together representatives from diverse European Partnerships to explore successful collaboration approaches involving various actors. The session revolved around three broad questions: (1) the strategic purpose and value of collaborations (2) collaborations and long-term impact (3) collaborations as a source of resilience in a changing world.

Theme 1. Strategic purpose and value of multi-actor collaborations

European Partnerships showcase the vital role of multi-actor collaborations in addressing complex societal challenges. By bringing together researchers, policymakers, industry representatives, and civil society, they connect actors across scales and domains. Each partnership has developed unique approaches to collaborations tailored to their context, ranging from local city panels to co-create urban solutions to large regional initiatives involving national ministries, research organizations, innovation funds, and regional authorities.

While partnerships may initiate collaborations, actors may be drawn for different reasons. Research institutions and universities may seek opportunities for applying the results, while SMEs and startups may be attracted by additional funding and reduced financial risks. Large industries participate to explore and align with broader policy agendas, while public authorities aim to engage in co-shaping priorities and learning. Acknowledging this diversity of motivations allows collaborations to be meaningful for diverse parties, while finding synergies at the interface of those different purposes.

The partnerships also seek ways that help to best connect to the specific stakeholder groups. Some actors appreciate opportunities to network, while others aim to explore opportunities across the value chains, connecting manufacturers, infrastructure providers, and public authorities.

⁷ Matti, C., Jensen, K., Bontoux, L., Goran, P., Pistocchi, A., & Salvi, M. (2023). Towards a fair and sustainable Europe 2050: social and economic choices in sustainability transitions. Joint Research Centre. https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/news/all-research-and-innovation-news/new-codes-practice-industry-academia-co-creation-and-citizen-engagement-knowledge-valorisation-2024-03-05_en.

⁸ European Commission (2024a). Horizon Europe and the Green Transition. Interim evaluation support study: final report ("Phase 2" study).

Partnerships also acknowledge the value of sustaining and developing collaborations over time as a way to build trust and mutual understanding across diverse communities.

Theme 2. Building collaborations for long-term impact

Partnerships have developed diverse approaches to managing stakeholder expectations and fostering effective collaboration. For instance, DUT's City Panels have proven effective in creating an environment where cities can share best practices and directly influence partnership direction, while their Urban Doers Community empowers grassroots actors to co-create solutions and share experiences. Engaging actors online is particularly helpful when there is a need to lower the threshold for engagement and the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted many of the previous collaboration models. Meanwhile, live engagement has remained important to develop deeper connections. Such varied approaches ensure that diverse voices are heard and valued, which in turn builds trust.



Source: DUT Partnership

Regional engagement has emerged as a crucial factor in successful collaborations and overcoming fragmentation, where the presence of dedicated bridging nodes is of particular importance. For instance, the Sustainable Blue Economy partnership organizes regional workshops to connect with local actors who might otherwise be difficult to reach, while CCAM's governance model enables cities and regions to participate directly alongside industry partners. This helps ensure that partnership activities remain grounded in local realities while contributing to broader European objectives.

Multi-actor approaches are particularly important in complex settings. The Circular Bio-based Europe JU provided examples of how consortia can bring together SMEs, large companies, and innovation clusters, collaborating to create new value chains from sugar beet industry waste streams. Ownership by all actors throughout the project lifecycle, fostering demand-driven

innovation, and maintaining flexibility to address evolving challenges were identified as important success factors for long-term impact.

Achieving long-term impact from collaborations requires careful coordination and oversight, crucial for navigating diverse interests and needs. Those need to be democratic, and effective but also simplified as collaborations may collapse under excessive administrative burdens. Multilevel governance and clear mechanisms to contribute opinions help maintain transparency and trust while ensuring informed decision-making based on multiple perspectives.

Theme 3. Leveraging collaborations for resilience under change

In periods of rapid change, partnerships emphasize the importance of adaptability and inclusivity in the design and steering of collaborations. However, this agility is often constrained by administrative frameworks, highlighting the need for greater responsivity in the designs of collaboration approaches. To build resilience amid change partnerships can utilize collaborations to coordinate responses to new challenges, broaden participation to include emerging actors, and strengthen existing links.

Speakers highlighted the need for flexibility in grant agreements to respond to emerging priorities, and in project management to allow necessary adjustments as new knowledge emerges. Partnerships also stressed the importance of continued work on widening participation to ensure all parts of Europe are well represented. This includes increasing participation by underrepresented actors and strengthening the involvement of Member States to better align with national and regional strategies.

Further, there is much potential for alignment with existing initiatives, such as aligning partnership activities with overarching EU Missions, as well as global initiatives like Mission Innovation and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Concluding, partnerships recognize the need for alliances to be shaped by both existing priorities and anticipation of future challenges and needs. This includes anticipating shifts in political objectives following changes in European institutions and adapting to evolving geopolitical situations. There is a need to maintain interest in existing activities and prepare the ground for collaborations under the future framework programmes. While shared learning provides benefits to all, balancing collaboration and competition is not always easy and equally perceived by various stakeholders. To strategically build resilience, partnerships highlighted the need for streamlining funding and governance processes, expanding international collaborations, maintaining European competitiveness, establishing robust impact monitoring frameworks, and creating centralized support mechanisms to coordinate collaborations and synergy creations. These considerations aim to inform more efficient, responsive, and impactful collaboration frameworks. By strategically designing collaborations, engaging diverse actors (including underrepresented groups) and continuous creative outreach, partnerships can become stronger drivers of systemic change.

7. Outlook to the next Framework Programme

The closing session hosted a presentation of the PKH opinion on the role of European Partnerships in FP10. The co-chair, Alexander Grablowitz, Head of Unit for EU Research and Innovation policy in the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) in Germany, presented the PKH Opinion that was recently prepared by a special working group of PKH members in close interaction with all the PKH members and partnership representatives. Citing the [Draghi](#) and the [Letta reports](#), Grablowitz stated that there are two main issues that are the new policy objectives for partnerships under FP10: the innovation paradox related to the failure to translate scientific advances into marketable innovations, and the fifth freedom, which is about the free circulation of knowledge technology and researchers next to the other four freedoms constituting the Single Market, i.e. free movement of people, goods, services and capital. *“The new policy approach that was adopted under Horizon Europe needs to be consolidated and made more impactful”* noted Grablowitz as one of the main messages stemming from the PKH opinion. *“Partnerships have proven their contribution to advancing the ERA and pooling sources and communities together to address common challenges. Now the focus should be on impact, knowledge valorisation and improving connections with the private sector.”*

Summarising the recommendations of the PKH opinion, the following were highlighted:

- To design the partnership portfolio in FP10 discussions should already start now given that this might include a number of very difficult choices that can only be made together, between Members States, the EU institutions and the partnership community.
- The selection process for partnerships is very important. Partnerships are built on trust and mutual understanding, and this needs time. The role of the partnerships should be clear in the overall framework and in the thematic fields of the Framework Programme. There may be room for improvement in further engaging the thematic Programme Committee configurations and for better defining the criteria for when to use the different types of partnerships (currently co-funded, co-programmed and institutionalised).
- There is a need for sufficiently resourced governance systems and structures that allow better alignment between the agendas of national policies with those at the EU level, as well as the programmes and interests of industry and businesses in the fields addressed.
- A tailor-made administrative framework for the partnerships is needed – partnerships are different than Horizon projects. The right conditions need to be put in place way ahead of the start of the next Framework Program to be ready for implementation.
- A flexible blending of different funding sources should be achieved. This discussion is at the core of creating synergies.
- Partnerships have been instrumental in establishing European communities on certain topics. This added value needs to be acknowledged. A differentiated way is needed on how the transnational dimension of a partnership should be funded; some cases may only need

networking support, while others might need more resources including co-funding of research activities.

The high-level round table⁹ that followed focused on the future of European Partnerships. Discussing the inputs from various perspectives, the goal was to examine if the current *modus operandi* should be continued or if any changes were needed and which these should be.

As noted by the discussants, partnerships need to focus more on knowledge valorisation and fully utilising their potential as a strategic policy instrument under an aligned strategy and roadmap with clear references on what is done at the EU, the national and regional levels. To address the innovation paradox, it is advisable to also implement innovation procurement and link the R&I policy with other policies including industrial policies. At the same time, the EIT-KIC model is a showcase of building innovation communities and can serve as a role model, but there is room for more links with other structures like the European Innovation Council.

The identification process of (new) areas to address with the partnership instrument needs to be made clearer. We need to understand the role of the partnerships in the overall thematic fields of the framework programme vis-à-vis other instruments. The alignment of policies of Member States, the EC, industrial associations, and the other key actors in the partnerships will help find clear priorities to focus on and should still be a priority in the next Framework Programme. A combined top-down and bottom-up approach is necessary allowing the strategic priorities of the EU and the Member States to match the interests of the research communities. Focusing on excellence and continuing to support fundamental research, among other types of research, for example in batteries, energy development, or green hydrogen is still important.

Partnerships could be an instrument for attracting private investment through not only in-kind but also financial contributions. Building on the community that has now been created and the culture of alignment for solving common problems, partnerships need to evolve by reducing the administrative burden, improving the portfolio approach, and ensuring agility to adopt. Openness and widening participation should continue to be high on the agenda as increasing connections with the regional level. Documenting success stories is vital for demonstrating the impact of partnerships.

Simplification remains a challenge, and efforts should focus on making them more attractive for beneficiaries. Partnerships need further streamline and consolidation, and to address their transition from relying on the Framework Programme funding. The EIT model targeting financial sustainability may also serve as an example. EIT-KIC funding is performance-based, which facilitates leveraging funding to move towards financial sustainability. EIT-KICs are also well placed to play a coordination role at the Cluster level, and can serve as an example for developing synergies among partnerships. Partnerships also need to communicate better what they are doing and contribute to making Europe an attractive environment for talents and innovation.

⁹ The discussants included Alexander Grablowitz, PKH Co-Chair, Axel Krein, Executive Director of Clean Aviation (JU), Muriel Attané, Secretary General of EARTO, Maria Chiara Carrozza, President of the Italian National Research Council (CNR), and Martin Kern, Director of the EIT.

The 20-year long collaborative experience has born valuable lessons on how to build communities and bring diverse stakeholder groups together, how to facilitate synergies among partnerships, how to design proper governance systems, implement simplification measures, and how to increase visibility of partnerships. *Partnerships have been a success, but we have to acknowledge that there is room for improvement in FP10 through reviewing priorities and focusing on a few selected ones, simplifying the administration, streamlining the landscape, ensuring transparency and openness, but also agility to adopt and putting greater emphasis on knowledge valorisation and links with the private sector.* The rich experience that has been built and the discussions that took place during the Forum are a valuable pool of lessons and practical solutions as well as impact stories that need to be shared and built upon on our way towards the next Framework Programme.

8. Annex I: Full Agenda

when

04/12/2024, 13:00 - 19:00 CET

05/12/2024, 09:00 - 14:00 CET

where

BluePoint Brussels

Bd. A. Reyers Ln 80, 1030 Brussels

04/12/2024

European Partnership Stakeholder Forum 2024, Day 1

12:00 – 14:00

Registration, welcome lunch and bilateral talks

13:45 – 14:00

Pre-Start: European Partnership Pitches

*Innovative Health Initiative
Photonics*

14:00 – 14:30

Welcome address

*Ekaterina Zaharieva, Commissioner for Start-ups, Research and Innovation,
DG RTD*

Keynote speeches

*Giorgio Gori (EP), Vice-Chair of the ITRE Committee
László Bódis, Deputy State Secretary for Innovation, representative of the
Hungarian Presidency*

14:30 – 15:30

20 years of European Partnerships – reflections and achievements

Panel discussion

*Daria Julkowska, Chair of the former expert group - BMR24'
Ute Gunsenheimer, Secretary General of the EOOSC Association
Wolfgang Ballensiefen, Coordinator EP PerMed, DLR
Rosalinde van der Vlies, DG RTD, Director DIR. C*

Moderation

Fabienne Gautier, DG RTD, Head of Unit G.4 Missions and Partnerships

15:30 – 16:00

Networking coffee

16:00 – 17:30

Parallel workshops along Clusters

A1: Cluster 1: Health

A3: Cluster 5: Climate, Energy,
Mobility

A2: Cluster 4: Digital, Industry and
Space

A4: Cluster 6: Food, Bioeconomy and
Natural resources, Agriculture and
Environment

17:30 – 19:00

Bilateral talks & Networking dinner

05/12/2024

European Partnership Stakeholder Forum 2024, Day 2

09:00 – 09:30

Day 2 Registration and coffee

09:30 – 10:45

Parallel workshops – improvements for FP10

B1: Partnership portfolio building: how to develop a coherent and strategic partnership landscape?

B2: Instrument design: how to foster simplification and effectiveness/efficiency?

B3: Multi-actor collaborations for transformative resilience and long-term impact

10:45 – 11:15

Networking coffee

11:15 – 11:30

Pre-Start: European Partnership Pitches

Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership

EIT Manufacturing

11:30 – 11:45

Main takeaways of parallel sessions and wrap up

European Partnerships: Shaping the Future - Outlook to the next Framework Programme

11:45 – 12:00

Presentation of the PKH opinion on FP10 by the Co-chair

Alexander Grablowitz, PKH Co-Chair

12:00 – 13:00

Panel discussion/ High-level round-table

Joanna Drake, DG RTD, Deputy Director-General for Research and Innovation

Alexander Grablowitz, PKH Co-Chair

Axel Krein, Executive Director of Clean Aviation (JU)

Muriel Attané, Secretary General of EARTO

Maria Chiara Carrozza, President of the Italian National Research Council (CNR)

Martin Kern, Director EIT

Moderation

Fabienne Gautier, DG RTD, Head of Unit G.4 Missions and Partnerships

13:00 – 14:00

Networking lunch

8.1. Parallel sessions Day 1 (4 Dec 2024, 16:00 – 17:30)

The parallel sessions (workshops) of the first day are organised along Clusters of Horizon Europe Pillar 2. The topics of the parallel sessions were defined beforehand together with the Partnership community.

A1: Cluster 1: Health

Goal of the session is to provide a platform for exchange on two concrete suggested topics by the partnership stakeholders. The session aims to collect open questions, good practices and concrete needs for support for activities in the partnerships.

The following two topics were discussed:

- **Digital Health and AI in healthcare:** Leveraging AI and digital tools to improve research, diagnosis, treatment, and prevention.
- **Health and Societal readiness/** public engagement/ outreach activities (also: strategic & policy documents and briefs).

The topics were introduced by representatives from the European Partnerships AI Data and Robotics and ERA4Health. Both topics were discussed at 4 discussion tables. Participants rotated to discuss both topics.

A2: Cluster 4: Digital, Industry and Space

In order to address the needs and expectations of the partnerships, the session was co-developed together with the partnerships. Session A2 fostered the exchange on experiences and good practices on topics identified by the partnerships. The session was structured around a panel discussion and interaction with the audience on three identified topics that the partnerships suggested, as follows:

- Responding to the needs of the industry
- From SRIA to project portfolio
- Creating synergies among partnerships

The session was structured as follows

- Intro to Cluster 4 information and data based on the BMR, Effie Amanatidou, ERA-LEARN
- Responding to the needs of the industry: intro talk by Maguelonne Chambon, Metrology partnership
- From SRIA to project portfolio: intro talk by Patrick Lafontaine, Clean Steel Partnership
- Creating synergies among partnerships:
 - intro Talk Konstantinos Georgoulas, EIT manufacturing
 - intro Talk Hugo Thienpont Photonics Partnership

Each intro talk was followed by a panel discussion involving the audience.

A3: Cluster 5: Climate, Energy, Mobility

Energy and mobility lie within the core of modern societies. In the eve of XXI Century, Climate change has risen as one of the main challenges for upcoming years. The workshop aims to develop innovative solutions to make European industries and value chains, with a focus on energy and transport sectors more climate and environment-friendly, smarter, safer and more resilient, while optimizing their efficiency and competitiveness

Due to the multifactorial realities affecting the three guiding topics of the workshop and the different approaches of the Partnership experience, the session was intended to exchange experiences and solutions, share success stories and try to co-create solutions to optimize the impact of the Partnerships on citizens and society and looking for a needed collaboration with third countries. The session addressed the following questions:

- What are the operational enablers and barriers in the Partnership context regarding Cluster 5? Consider governance structure and reporting.
- What are the key factors for making an impact in a climate, energy and mobility initiatives?
- Could you share some examples of good practices on synergies and proposals to optimize them?
- Due to the need to consider both a global and local approach to climate, energy and mobility innovations, what are the main threats, needs and opportunities for collaboration with third countries and implement a global and local dimension?
 - Need to develop geographical specific Partnerships? Or the existing Partnerships should boost their collaboration and activities involving different geographical areas beyond EU.

The session was structured around a panel discussion and interaction with the audience on the previous four questions which are related to the topics that the partnerships suggested, as follows:

- From SRIA to project portfolio. Improve partnership governance, relation with Member States and COM and procedural aspects of the partnership coordination.
- Key factors for achieving impact. From the Work program and calls to success stories:
- Creating synergies among partnerships.
- Threats, needs and opportunities for collaboration with third countries

A4: Cluster 6: Food, Bioeconomy and Natural resources, Agriculture and Environment

Session A4 provides a platform for exchange on concrete needs shared amongst partnerships in the Cluster. In order to discuss the topics with as many workshop participants as possible in an interactive way, a world café was set up with four topics to be discussed:

- **Joint activities between Partnerships:** running joint calls; other joint activities including alignment, clustering of projects, broader impacts (data schemes for better European transnational monitoring, digitalization etc.), etc.
- **Stakeholder engagement:** approaches across the three project stages: proposal, implementation and post-project.
- **International cooperation and enlargement:** approaches for effective enlargement, partnership sizes, newcomers involvement.
- **Partnership implementation aspects:** organizing co-funded calls (including interacting with the EC), Grant 2nd phase application, Life cycle approach)

8.2. Parallel sessions Day 2 (5 Dec 2024, 09:30 – 10:45)

B1: Partnership Portfolio Building: how to develop a coherent and strategic partnership landscape?

Effective portfolio planning should be central to selecting thematic topics for partnerships, ensuring they remain adaptable in a dynamic landscape and enable a strategic allocation of resources. Without well-defined criteria, a bottom-up approach risks an overabundance of initiatives, leading to legacy issues (repeated or similar topics across Framework Programmes), overlaps, and potential gaps in unmet needs. Currently, no objective, measurable criteria exist to substantiate that a European Partnership is the optimal mechanism to address specific thematic needs.

This breakout session was structured as an interactive, collaborative design exercise aimed at rethinking the methodology to build a coherent and fit for purpose portfolio of European Partnership. Participants worked together to find an equilibrium between top-down and bottom-up approaches, helping ensure partnerships are both purpose-driven and strategically aligned. Format/Choreography

Participants formed 10 groups, with two groups assigned to each dimension of portfolio building as shown below. Each group explored both the pros and cons of their assigned dimension and translated these insights into specific criteria for evaluating partnership portfolios. The opportunity to use Sli.do to comment during of after the workshops was also possible.

- 1- Size of partnership theme: Broad vs. Focused**
 - a. What are the benefits and drawbacks of addressing a broad thematic area?
 - b. What are the benefits and drawbacks of addressing a focused thematic area?
 - c. What criteria should be used to determine whether a partnership theme should be expansive or specific?
- 2- Identification of thematic priorities: Bottom-up vs. Top-down**
 - a. What are the benefits and drawbacks of addressing a bottom-up, stakeholder-driven identification process?
 - b. What are the benefits and drawbacks of a top-down approach informed by foresight and policy priorities?
 - c. How can the process be designed to collect input while ensuring strategic alignment?
- 3- Justification for the partnership approach: Added Value**
 - a. What are the benefits and drawbacks of adopting the partnership approach to address an issue?
 - b. What criteria could be used to justify the added value of the use of a partnership approach over other mechanisms?
- 4- Coherence: Synergy vs. Overlap with existing initiatives**
 - a. How to distinguish an overlap from a synergy at the partnership candidate stage?
 - b. What criteria or mechanisms should be implemented at the candidate stage to identify and mitigate potential overlaps?

- c. What criteria or mechanisms should be implemented at the candidate stage to maximize synergies with existing initiatives?

5- Stakeholder interest: Targeted vs. Inclusive participation

- a. What are the benefits and drawbacks of an interest-based approach to partnerships?
- b. What are the benefits and drawbacks of an open-to-all approach to partnerships?
- c. Is it possible to strike a balance between these two approaches? If so, how could it be implemented? If not, how should the choice between the two approaches be made?

B2: Instrument design: how to foster simplification and effectiveness/efficiency?

The current typology of partnership instruments is based mainly on a hard delineation between what are three different approaches to practical implementation of long-term and strategic cooperations. Still, the primary activity of all the different types of partnerships is mainly joint transnational calls, complemented with a range of additional in-kind activities. It has become clear throughout Horizon Europe that there is a continuous issue with the consistency and complexity in implementation and clarity in the delineation of the scope for individual partnerships. They might also not always offer the necessary flexibility for partners to engage in ambitious joint programmes.

This breakout session was structured as an interactive, collaborative design exercise aimed at rethinking partnership instruments to enhance simplicity and effectiveness by design. Participants worked together to identify solutions that address current barriers and enable more coherent and impactful European Partnerships.

Participants formed 8 groups, with two groups assigned to each dimension of portfolio building as shown below. Each group explored both the pros and cons of their assigned dimension and translated these insights into specific criteria for evaluating partnership portfolios. The opportunity to use Sli.do to comment during of after the workshops was also possible.

1. Implementation types: public-public & public-private vs. Tripartite

- a. What are the benefits and drawbacks of structuring cooperations along public-public (EC-MS/AC) and public-private (EC-industry) lines?
- b. What are the benefits and drawbacks of a tripartite (EC-MS/AC-industry) approach?
- c. How can we further simplify the current toolbox to ensure greater flexibility and efficiency of the instrument in the future?

2. Additional activities

- a. What are the benefits and challenges of incorporating additional activities beyond core R&I funding within European Partnerships?
- b. How could a common approach to additional activities be designed that would be suited to determine/ensure their additionality?

3. Implementation structures: Common back office vs. individualised structures

- a. What are the benefits and drawbacks of using a common back office (ICT, accounting, HR, procurements, data collection) approach to partnerships?

- b. What are the benefits and drawbacks of individualised implementation structures and back offices?
- c. What features or governance mechanisms should be considered to optimise and incentivise the use of common or tailored implementation structures to meet diverse partnership needs?

4. Life cycle: built-in exit vs. result-focused approach

- a. What are the opportunities and risks of a built-in exit approach (partnerships are designed with a clear exit strategy or handover plan from the beginning, e.g. KIC model with mandatory financial sustainability after 15 years)?
- b. What are the benefits and drawbacks of a result-focused approach (centred around defining long-term outcomes and impacts at the outset, with lifecycle stages designed to ensure alignment with these objectives)?
- c. How can the lifecycle approach be better embedded into the partnerships instrument?

B3: Multi-actor collaborations for transformative resilience and long-term impact

Meaningful collaboration with stakeholders is among the key priorities for European Partnerships. It matters at every step, from initiating the partnership and developing SRIAs, and further in ensuring sound governance and implementation to achieve long-term impacts. Engaging multiple actors is also critical for enabling broader sustainability transitions (Matti et al, 2023) and ensuring resilience under uncertainty and change.

Effective engagement requires an ongoing dialogue and consideration of specific needs, so to decide on whom to engage, how and when. As highlighted by the recent interim evaluation of Horizon Europe, while European Partnerships have managed to engage diverse stakeholder groups, there is still scope for enhancing consideration of diverse needs and making use of collaborations to scale impact (European Commission, 2024a).

The session of the forum will therefore focus on successful examples of multi-actor engagement by the European partnerships, illuminated by both overarching strategic approaches to collaboration as well as specific programmes, platforms and networks that enable and facilitate long-term impacts and transformative resilience of the European Partnerships. The session will address the following questions:

- How do partnerships strategically approach multi-actor engagement and leverage collaborations to achieve impact?
- What are the enablers for and barriers towards effective collaborations in the European Partnerships context?
- How can European Partnerships leverage distinct capacities of different actors to foster transformative resilience and change?

Partnerships will be invited to share their experiences, reflect upon engagement success and failures, and discuss how to ensure engagement that makes sense over the long-term. It will also discuss recent developments in the context of new codes of practices on industry-academia collaborations and citizen engagement (European Commission, 2024b), as well as within the broader ERA context addressing issues such as acceptance, uptake, and trust.

Imprint

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