



UNIVERSITETET I OSLO

Kunnskapsdepartementet
Avdeling for høyere utdanning, forskning
og internasjonalt arbeid

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Innspill til høring om tematiske innspill til EUs kommende rammeprogram for forskning og innovasjon

Universitetet i Oslo takker for anledningen til å bidra i Kunnskapsdepartementets arbeid med et norsk innspill om tematiske prioriteringer til EUs kommende rammeprogram.

Universitetet anerkjenner betydningen av EUs prioriteringer innen forskning og utvikling, og slutter seg til norske prioriteringer slik de er uttrykt i regjeringens Langtidsplan for forskning og høyere utdanning samt de første norske tematiske innspillene.

UiO har invitert våre enheter og miljøer til å gi innspill til denne høringen, og deres tilbakemeldinger er inkludert i universitetets innspill.

Med hilsen

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University of Oslo's input to the Consultation on Thematic Contributions to the EU's Upcoming Framework Programme for Research and Innovation

Background

UiO has previously contributed to the development of the EU's framework programme through national consultation rounds, the Guild, and directly to the Commission's open consultations. We have emphasized the more structural aspects for FP10, which we believe are still crucial for the thematic inputs:

- The importance of preserving and strengthening Pillar I and fundamental research. Excellent, fundamental research forms the knowledge base for making thematic priorities and creating innovative solutions to major societal challenges.
- The importance of thematic priorities to address major societal challenges through collaborative projects, but a need to increase the number of calls with low TRL levels in Pillar II to find a good balance between research and innovation.
- Ensure a systematic approach to interdisciplinarity and the integration of social sciences and humanities.
- Predictability and simplification.
- Reorient the Missions with a more bottom-up approach, smaller projects, and lower TRL levels.
- Clarify synergies and avoid duplication between Partnerships and other parts of the framework programme that may address similar themes.

Input to the Ministry's specific questions

1. *Which thematic areas are particularly important for us to collaborate on at the European level in the upcoming framework programme? Justify the proposals and explain how they will contribute to European added value.*

As a starting point UiO would like to underline the ubiquitous need for research to address the range of complex societal, economic and political challenges that Europe is faced with. Most of them have a strong global opponent, societal root causes and deep consequences for the way that we organize our lives, impacting peoples' quality of life. The complexity of societal change and speed of technological change also implies that narrow definitions of research questions and short-term approaches are inadequate. We need to ensure that **clearer approach to the importance of the humanities and social sciences in research addressing** major societal issues, not just as add-on to interdisciplinary projects. This includes perspectives such as cultural, social, and religious understandings related to sustainability and the environment, democratic structures and processes, governance, ethics, and ethical responsibility for migration processes and refugees.

UiO deems the follow topics to be high priority:

- **Sustainability and green transition** are pervasive themes that requires cross-cutting prioritization and delivers European added value. We need research that integrates both environmental and societal dimensions. Relevant themes can include deep knowledge of climate, nature and the environment, research on sustainable societal development and green transition in politics and economics, impacts on public health, and a broader understanding of sustainability that includes cultural and social change processes.
- **Democratic resilience** is a core area for Europe's future, especially in facing challenges like political extremism, autocratization, and social inequality. We need research to build understanding of autocratic processes and early warning signs, knowledge of political extremism, deglobalization, inequality and social exclusion related to the labor market, housing market and tax systems,

research on governance and public administration as tools for strategic autonomy and counteracting democratic weakening and exploring cultural and religious complexity in democratic structures and processes.

- **Health is a broad and important area** that spans many disciplines and aspects. A keyword list would include:
 - Sustainable health and care services: Developing systems to handle aging populations and ensure equitable access to healthcare. Collaboration for cost-effectiveness and optimal resource use.
 - Mental health: Prioritizing research on mental health issues, pandemic impacts, and social challenges. Collaboration for standardization of prevention and treatment.
 - Aging and neurodegenerative diseases: Increasing understanding of aging and related diseases. Common solutions for age-related challenges in Europe.
 - Migration and reduced health: Research on health challenges among refugees. Coordinated European efforts for mental health disorders and trauma.
 - Women's health and gender differences: Research on health disparities and causes related to gender. Focus on women's health and unwanted gender differences.
 - Personalized medicine: Use of genetic profiles, lifestyle, and environment for improved disease treatment.
 - Artificial intelligence in healthcare: Promoting AI research and innovation. Collaboration for regulation and ethical frameworks.
- **Digitization is pervasive across all sectors** of society and R&D priorities, and European collaboration can contribute through developing common standards and infrastructure. We must ensure quality and accessibility in healthcare through digital health innovation. Norway's robust health data infrastructure can contribute to a pan-European digital health infrastructure that supports biocompatibility assessments across clinical contexts. We need knowledge on how digitization can support learning and education effectively. Research on how digital technologies and ideologies spread on digital platforms, and their societal impacts on democratic processes and the rule of law is also necessary.
- **Norway needs knowledge in computing** to digitize society and use IT technology, but has few companies that develop IT technology for international markets. To educate qualified candidates and build a strong European industry, Norway must collaborate with European research communities. For instance, Norway's participation in the LUMI supercomputer project provides access to significant computing power and valuable knowledge on parallel computing, beneficial for industry in advanced simulations such as offshore wind turbines and pharmaceutical development.

2. *The European partnerships and societal missions:*

As a research-intensive university, UiO finds it challenging to participate in European Partnerships, and would like to see a review and simplification of the Partnership's structure and governance. Partnerships require high TRL and are often closely linked to industry innovation, making them less relevant to many research communities. Partnerships can vary in administrative and organizational structure and involve co-funding with national financing, leading to less predictability. UiO has experienced instances with a lack of national funding for approved Co-funded partnership projects, resulting in the termination of UiO's participation. Moreover, we see that research within a revised partnership model would benefit from including partners from the global south.

Similarly, Missions seem to be geared towards demonstration and implementation activities rather than academia and fundamental research. UiO has pointed out the need for a reorientation of Missions with a focus on attracting the research community through a bottom-up approach, smaller projects, lower TRL levels, and including missions in relevant work packages in collaborative projects.

Our academic environments have still highlighted the following areas needing a concerted effort:

- The Long-Term Plan has **youth exclusion** as a societal Mission, and Norway seeks to coordinate research efforts with the EU. This includes themes such as participation in various communities, inequality in education and work, mental health, and societal inclusion, as well as the full inclusion of ethnic and religious minorities in democratic states. Including humanities and social science research is crucial to contribute to solutions to these challenges.
- **Sustainable transformation** requires changes in economy, organization, governance, values, and mindsets. Climate change and environmental problems require natural science knowledge and technological solutions. Climate change also impacts public health. The sustainability crises are a shared European, complex challenge suitable as a societal Mission.
- **Democratic resilience.** Freedom and democracy are fundamental European values challenged by polarization and disinformation. This area requires European cooperation and participation from political levels, public institutions, and academia.
- **Antibiotic resistance, infection prevention, and vaccine research.** Antibiotic resistance is a serious threat to public health, requiring both research and practical measures. Experiences from COVID-19 show that European-level collaboration and resource coordination were crucial for a rapid response and vaccine development. Partnerships among the public sector, research environments, and industry can strengthen the development of new antibiotics and preventive measures to reduce healthcare costs and increase patient safety.
- **Aging population.** Norway's aging population increases the need for sustainable, high-quality municipal health services. By participating in European societal Missions and Partnerships, Norway can contribute to promoting innovative solutions that combine public and private sectors for tailored health services, which can also be exported to other European countries.
- **Cancer and cancer treatment.** Cancer remains a major health challenge. Despite the ambitious goals set for the Mission cancer in Horizon 2020, there will be a need for significant research efforts in this area, which will be relevant both as a societal mission and a partnership. Collaboration with industry and public actors is necessary for the development of new medications, treatments, diagnostics, and health services.

3. *Are there other aspects that are important to highlight in a national thematic input?*

- **Pillar II, with its clusters and multiple thematic calls, should be a cornerstone in any framework programme.** Academia has a responsibility to participate in solving societal challenges through engaging in cross-sectoral and cross-disciplinary research and innovation, creating added value for Europe.
- **The role of fundamental research.** As a research-intensive university we urge the importance of excellent research in all FPs. New knowledge is central when formulating future research questions and solving global challenges. The free, research-driven arenas such as ERC and MSCA must be safeguarded and strengthened. Preserving academic freedom through financial resources and institutional frameworks is crucial to allow for research questions that may be important for societal development but not immediately driven by political priorities.
- **Fewer descriptive and more open thematic calls as well as continued simplification measures.** Any changes should aim for greater accessibility and simplification so that the instruments are more accessible and attractive, even for new participants.
- **Interdisciplinary approaches and coordination.** Major global challenges require efforts from the entire global community. The climate crisis, loss of natural diversity, health and welfare challenges, polarization and threats to democracy are all examples of areas that will require interdisciplinary and innovative solutions. Only through coordinating efforts can we develop comprehensive solutions with greater impact both locally and at the European level.