ENSURING PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY AND SOCIETAL IMPACT, 
PRIORITISING GLOBAL CHALLENGES IN FP9: 
REACTION TO THE LEAKED FP9 IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Based on the leak of the draft Impact Assessment of the EU’s next research framework programme (FP9), we strongly warn against the proposed merging of parts of Horizon 2020 Pillar II (Industrial Leadership) with Pillar III (Societal Challenges) in the next framework.

According to the assessment, “the [new] second pillar [“global challenges”] will integrate the Horizon 2020 Societal Challenges and Leadership in Enabling Industrial technologies parts to better address EU policy priorities (including meeting the SDGs) and support industrial competitiveness”. Moreover, changes under the new framework will include a “higher visibility for industry’s role in solving global challenges”.

All publicly-funded R&I should be focused on delivering societal impact, and industry is a key partner in this. Under FP9, however, the objective of delivering societal impact should not be diluted by adding the objective of industrial competitiveness to the same pillar. This will negatively impact:

**Diversion of funds:** A future pillar that has to address the two priorities risks limiting the already-scarce funding available for addressing societal challenges.

**Accountability for public investments:** Merging profit-oriented with societal-impact-oriented objectives threatens the traceability of public funding, which is needed to make sure there is a public return on public investments.

**Societal impact:** Past evaluations of FP7 and H2020\(^1\) show that any evidence of societal impact in general, and on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in particular, remains very limited. That is why there is a need to design a pillar that can focus on, deliver for, and track impact on sustainable development.

**Economic impact:** Scientific excellence that focuses on sustainable development already creates jobs and has a significant economic return on investment, in and of itself, and without having to rely on adding “industrial competitiveness” to the programme pillar.

**Political priorities:** The European Parliament has already called on the Commission to “enhance the societal challenges approach”\(^2\) and Member States have called for more societal impact in their national positions on FP9 – contrary to what would happen if the pillars were merged.

Dedicated and ambitious funding, together with a corresponding strategy and vision, need to feature prominently in FP9 if the EU is serious about delivering on international commitments such as the SDGs and the Paris Climate Agreement.

Societal challenges, as per the SDGs, need to be addressed in an independent pillar for global societal challenges, while at the same time being mainstreamed through all other parts of the future programme, facilitating necessary cross-pillar collaboration and synergies. Adequate safeguards and conditionalities need to be in place to ensure that the allocation of public funds responds to public needs, delivers affordable and accessible R&I solutions to improve people’s lives and well-being, and contributing to realising the EU’s commitments as part of the SDGs and the Paris Climate Agreement.

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