



CITIES AND REGIONS FOR TRANSPORT INNOVATION

TOWARDS HORIZON EUROPE: THE 9TH FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME FOR RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Securing the future of urban mobility
research & innovation in Europe

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ABOUT POLIS

POLIS is the leading network of European cities and regions working together to promote sustainable mobility through the deployment of innovative transport policies and solutions.

POLIS fosters multi-stakeholder cooperation and public-private partnerships across Europe with the aim to make research and innovation in transport accessible to cities and regions. The network and its Brussels-based secretariat actively supports the participation of POLIS members in EU-funded research and innovation projects in the field of transport. POLIS' and its members' participation in European projects allows us to create a framework which facilitates dialogue and exchange between local and regional authorities and European transport research and industry stakeholders.

Through its vice-chairmanship of ERTRAC, and its lead of ERTRAC's Urban Mobility Working Group, Polis is the best-placed network to discuss urban mobility research and innovation policy. In view of the current discussions and negotiations regarding Horizon Europe, the upcoming 9th Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, and based upon its experience with EU research and innovation since FP3, Polis would like to highlight a number of needs and points of attention in this document.

THE FOCUS OF R&I ACTIVITIES: WHAT SHOULD URBAN MOBILITY R&I ADDRESS?

Europe's urban population and economic activity is growing¹. Cities and regions want to provide citizens with transport services which meet their mobility needs in an inclusive, fair, accessible, and flexible way. Yet, local policy makers also want their cities to be pleasant, attractive and healthy places to live, work and be in. This at the same time requires tackling many severe transport-related societal challenges, such as congestion, air and noise pollution and safety, which pose a threat to the same citizens' health and well-being and overall quality of life. How to reconcile the needs of today's connected traveller, who wants flexible and high-quality mobility services, with the sometimes-drastic measures needed to address the aforementioned challenges?

This question is at the heart of today's and tomorrow's sustainable mobility policy, along with the question how and to what extent new and emerging technologies and mobility services such as automation, Mobility as a Service (MaaS), open and big data, can help cities to shape the urban transport system in a way that it serves its users as well as benefits the local urban fabric as a whole, in a sustainable way.

Addressing these questions and tackling these challenges requires a joint effort of the public and private sector, of public authorities, research and industry stakeholders. Cities and regions are incubators and living labs for innovation, and new technologies and new mobility services, in as far as these can help and contribute to solving the problems they face.

Many of the current and emerging trends, transitions, innovations and disruptions in the transport sector, including MaaS, Cooperative Intelligent Transport Systems (C-ITS), automation, new and shared mobility services, active travel, Urban Freight and Logistics (UFL), access regulations, electrification, hydrogen propulsion solutions, etc., are happening in cities.

Cities and regions are central in coordinating policies, managing change and managing investment. It is important for them to make informed, evidence-based and data-driven decisions and policy choices in this regard. European Research and Innovation can help to create this knowledge base.

The focus of most urban mobility R&I projects has been on close-to-market deployment of innovation. This path is worthwhile continuing. However, more is needed than just developing new solutions and technologies. There should be increased attention for and effort on actually preparing and enabling local authorities to work with and deploy innovation. Capacity needs to be built in cities and regions as well as within the industry, on how to optimise cooperation between the public and private sector. This implies better understanding and accommodating the changes in the role of cities and regions in providing transport services, systems and infrastructure, and properly framing the expanding role of the private sector and other third parties. An informed, trained and prepared 'demand' side of the market will enable innovation to take root more quickly and profoundly.

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¹ "Today, 72% of the total EU population live in cities, towns and suburbs, and this figure is expected to increase to 80% by 2020. Since the mid-1950s, the total surface area of cities in the EU has increased by 78%." Source:

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/573898/EPRS_BRI\(2016\)573898_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/573898/EPRS_BRI(2016)573898_EN.pdf)

Crucial in this regard is the ability of local and regional authorities to build regulatory frameworks that enable, steer and frame innovation. The R&I efforts within the field of urban mobility should create a policy outfit for cities and regions that makes it possible for them to point innovation, disruptive or planned, in the appropriate direction, in a way that it serves sustainable mobility policy goals.

THE POSITION OF TRANSPORT AND URBAN MOBILITY IN HORIZON EUROPE

Polis appreciates the new conceptual framework launched on the 2nd of May with regards to innovation funding programmes. This offers important opportunities for urban mobility and innovation.

We understand the concerns of EU policy makers to break open silos, and think in a multi- or interdisciplinary way. The urban mobility research community is confident in this regard: it has operated in such a way for the past decades, embracing a holistic, multi-modal, cross-sectoral approach, incorporating health, energy, environment, ICT, and socio-economic research in its activities.

As it stands, transport research would not see its own dedicated work programme – which was the case in the previous framework programmes. Transport will be part of a clustered challenge “Energy, Climate and Transport”. Polis regrets this choice: the importance of transport, and within that urban mobility, might become diluted that way. This may particularly be a concern as for a framework period (2021-2027) which is running up to key milestones linked to two urban mobility-related objectives (out of ten), set by the EC in the 2011 White Paper on Transport, namely:

- Halve the use of ‘conventionally fuelled’ cars in urban transport by 2030; phase them out in cities by 2050; achieve essentially CO₂-free city logistics in major urban centres by 2030
- By 2050, move close to zero fatalities in road transport. In line with this goal, the EU aims at halving road casualties

Therefore, Polis asks that transport research should receive an equal and balanced share in the clustered work programmes and is not made subsidiary to the policy fields it is clustered with, i.e. energy and climate. Also, within transport, a dedicated urban mobility stream of call topics should be defined, with appropriate budgets allocated to these topics. The Draft Regulation to establish Horizon Europe (EC COM(2018) 435)² underlines the importance of smaller-scale collaborative projects for widening participation, and calls for greater citizen involvement with the Programme and for the definition of the missions. All this cannot overlook the direct involvement of local authorities, the first representatives of citizens' needs in transport policies. Transport should also raise its profile in those parts of the research programmes that currently fit under Energy (such as the Smart Cities and Communities Light House project stream), and ICT.

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² Proposal for a REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL establishing Horizon Europe – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, laying down its rules for participation and dissemination

URBAN MOBILITY AS A KEY ISSUE IN HORIZON EUROPE MISSIONS

The concept of missions as part of the global challenges pillar is refreshing. However, this envisaged missions approach for Horizon Europe could very well result in policy areas which are too broad and generic and therefore not suitable for translation into operational research priorities. The currently used operational instruments (Innovation Actions, Research and Innovation Actions, Coordination and Support Actions) should therefore complement a broad mission-oriented approach and ensure it remains targeted, operational and practical.

Polis looks forward to further information about how these missions will take shape in concrete terms. The clear reference to clean mobility in the EC communication is welcomed. A mission on clean mobility should clearly relate to ambitions and targets that have been expressed earlier in relevant EU policy documents, e.g. carbon-neutral logistics in cities by 2030.

We would also welcome the mainstreaming of urban mobility in other missions. Indeed, most missions could clearly have an urban mobility or transport component. To name just a few, reverse logistics when referring to circular economy, healthy lifestyles and active travel as well as air quality improvement, when referring to the fight against cancer and obesity.

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R&I GOVERNANCE AND INSTRUMENTS

As mentioned above, Polis is cautious about the clustered work programmes. One of the concerns in this regard specifically relates to the governance of developing these work programmes. For urban mobility, a highly professional, inherently multi-modal and multi-disciplinary community of industry leaders, researchers, national and local governments has been established and structured over time, to inform the EC's DG MOVE, CONNECT and R&I about research and innovation needs and priorities. It is unclear how interests between different sectors will be brokered, to what degree synergies between Transport, Climate and Energy will be developed, and how information about transport R&I research priorities will reach those deciding on the clustered work programmes. Cities and regions should be heard when defining priorities for research and innovation. To this end, it is clear that cities and regions need to be represented in the European Innovation Council.

Polis welcomes the overall view of the Multi-Annual Financial Framework, including Horizon Europe, that funding should be better targeted to policy relevant outputs. Polis calls for more policy relevance in research and innovation. This is not only an issue of choosing policy relevant topics for R&I, but also of the R&I approaches selected as such. To enable this, instruments for policy transfer and upscaling of solutions should be fostered. More funds for exchange and capacity building targeted at cities and regions - similar to the former IEE - STEER programme, which never saw a proper replacement – is therefore needed. Upscaling, transferability and replication approaches are also instrumental in making sure that EU-funded innovations and solutions don't disappear after having been piloted, but are taken forward through a legacy that allows for further roll-out, deployment and exploitation on a larger scale and on the longer term.

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Polis also calls for a continuation of the CIVITAS initiative under the Horizon Europe Framework Programme. Soon to celebrate its 20th anniversary, the programme has given a leading role to cities as living labs for innovation, has united the urban mobility research community, has created momentum for change and has developed long-lasting sustainable urban mobility solutions in cities.

The Horizon Europe programme will coincide with the establishment of the Urban Mobility KIC – managed under the EIT. The relation between R&I activities within the framework programme and the KIC's activities should be carefully crafted. Acceleration of uptake of Horizon Europe results should be key in the KIC. Capacity building of public authorities' staff could also be linked to the KIC's educational stream in that respect. It is clear however, that the services offered by the KIC cannot replace the type of research and innovation funding as offered under the EC's framework programmes.

The current communication does not provide clarity about the future of the PPPs and other silo-ised structures within the research arena (COST, SHIFT2RAIL, FCHJU). Cities and regions have difficulties entering activities of these structures, which often operate as closed communities.

With regards to financial conditions in Horizon Europe, Polis welcomes the proposal that the 100% funding rate for public authorities and non-profit entities is be maintained. This has led in Horizon 2020 (in comparison to FP7) to an enthusiasm in R&I activities for cities and regions that should live on for the next decade.

Polis looks forward to further engaging in a dialogue with all stakeholders concerned and elaborating on the important role of urban mobility as well as cities and regions in European research and innovation.

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