

The Guild's response to the Lamy report

The Guild welcomes the High-Level Group report on “maximising the impact of EU Research and Innovation Programmes” (Lamy Report). The group, led by Pascal Lamy, laid out its vision for the next Framework Programme (FP9), which sees a doubling of EU investment in research and innovation as essential to Europe’s future. We agree that research and innovation must be prioritised in both national and EU budgets, and that EU funding must focus on where the true European value-add lies: in assuring international excellence, and in enabling the cross-border collaboration of the best minds. It is true that only investment in research, education and innovation can secure Europe’s place in the world economically. Yet, the importance of such investment goes further still, it goes to the essence of our public life. The creation of new knowledge is central to how we live, discuss and engage with each other. As Fridtjof Nansen said in his 1922 Nobel Prize Lecture, the persistent will to deepen our understanding is the foundation of ability to master uncertainty, develop trust, and embrace drastic change. Investment in research, innovation and education are critical for Europe’s economic, social, and cultural welfare.

1. Frontier-led research is essential to strengthen our knowledge and understanding

The Lamy Report acknowledges Europe’s success as a ‘global scientific powerhouse’. This position must be strengthened by sustaining the prominence of excellence and of frontier-led research, as the cornerstones of the EU’s framework programmes. The EU has established a unique standard of excellence by creating internationally competitive research funds, and this excellence must continue to drive decisions for research funding across all instruments in FP9. We agree that more resources must be dedicated to the European Research Council and the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions, hence [the Guild calls for doubling their budgets](#). We must strengthen Europe’s scientific base not only because the most groundbreaking discoveries have resulted in breakthrough innovation. New knowledge in itself strengthens Europe’s cultures and societies through the students our universities teach, the citizens they engage with, and the wider debates our researchers stimulate and support.

2. The European Innovation Council (EIC) should foster all aspects of the innovation ecosystems, and all types of innovation

We welcome the High-Level Group’s commitment to enhance Europe’s capacity for innovation. The European Innovation Council can indeed provide new tools to support our innovators, though further reflection is needed on the ways in which the EIC can add most value to support innovation. We need to improve the ways in which we nurture all forms of innovation to benefit our societies: we must overcome current blockages at all levels, including the ‘valley of death’ between discovery and commercial application. We welcome the acknowledgement that true innovation can bear significant risk, and would urge better synergies with existing instruments for risk-based innovation through the European Fund for Strategic Investments. Universities are critical actors in innovation

ecosystems throughout Europe, and we look forward to engaging with the EIC in how we can help strengthen Europe's innovation ecosystems.

3. Missions of collaborative research must enable bottom-up and low-TRL research

We agree that the fundamental challenges our societies face should be addressed through missions, framed by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It is important to note that the “breakthrough or transformative potential for science, technology, industry or society” (p. 16) must include not only measurable outcomes, but also gains in our citizens' sense of justice, equality, fairness and good governance. Such goals, closely related to the SDGs, will require extensive collaborative research at low ‘technology readiness levels’ (TRL). They also illustrate that missions must be formulated carefully, as not all progress can be quantified numerically. We look forward to working with other stakeholders in exploring how missions can be best defined. Universities are at the intersection between research, education, innovation, and the communities they serve: they must be centrally involved with defining missions that reflect citizens' concerns, and address fundamental research questions.

4. We welcome a closer link between research, education and innovation to support knowledge, creativity and citizenship

The Lamy report recognises the importance of students as citizens, researchers and innovators, and we welcome a closer link between research, education and innovation. This connection between research-led education and ideas is critical: in teaching students about the boundaries of knowledge and how to push these, they must learn to ‘think outside the box’, within and beyond disciplinary boundaries. European universities have flourished over the centuries through their commitment to knowledge creation, and their critical engagement with the social and cultural changes around them through their teaching. We require more evidence to support the notion that we need a ‘fundamental reform’ in education. Moreover, it is not clear whether the proposition to create a ‘European university’ label for universities supporting the European agenda in research and innovation would add value. Knowledge and understanding are quintessential for creativity; therefore, we recognise the important role we have in educating our entrepreneurs and innovators. We look forward to continuing our engagement with the EU on the best ways of supporting transferrable skills including not only entrepreneurship and leadership, but also intercultural learning, numeracy skills, and critical reasoning capabilities.

5. The Guild supports increased synergies between Structural Funds and framework programmes, ensuring that excellent research is matched with outstanding research facilities

We welcome the High-Level Group's urging to create close links between Structural Funds and the framework programmes, and agree wholeheartedly that these programmes should be aligned from the beginning. We would urge the Commission to develop these ideas further. It is not clear that the participation gap between high- and low-performing regions can be reduced by creating more infrastructure in research and innovation: many outstanding research facilities have already been created in lower performing regions. The critical question may be the reverse: how to ensure that outstanding research infrastructures are filled with internationally excellent researchers. In its successive policy submissions on Horizon 2020 and FP9, the Guild has made detailed suggestions for how ring-fenced funds to widen participation can be optimised to strengthen and widen research excellence. We welcome the Lamy Group's proposal that such a ring-fenced budget should continue, but its purpose must focus on increasing excellence in research and innovation in target countries.

6. We must maximise the benefits of research and innovation for citizens – and tell the story

It is important to engage further with the Lamy Report's focus on citizens, who benefit from the knowledge we produce, and the innovation we generate. They must have trust in researchers asking the right questions to further new discoveries that benefit them, and they must have confidence in the excellence of our research results. Citizens are already involved in much of our research across the disciplinary spectrum, from medicine to humanities, as end users and collaborators. We welcome more support not only for opening up our research results to citizens, but also for genuinely engaging the public in our research projects. It is critical, then, that in designing missions, citizens are heard through national representations (which have a democratic mandate), and that we think about other appropriate forms of representation without compromising the excellence of the research questions, or diluting the possible outcomes of research and innovation.

7. International collaboration in research and innovation must be significantly enhanced

We strongly support the Lamy Report's emphasis on opening FP9 to association of an increased number of countries. As excellence must remain the cornerstone of EU funding for research and innovation, there is no need to pre-select countries that are deemed excellent in research and innovation: participation should be open to any country that wants it. On this basis, we strongly agree that we must strive to retain 'full and continued' integration of the UK in the next framework programme.