



A First Response to the Lamy Report

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The Closed Rectors Meeting at Coimbra Group Annual Conferences provides a welcome opportunity for Rectors and Vice-Rectors to discuss some of the strategic challenges facing our institutions and this year's meeting hosted by the University of Edinburgh was no exception. Perhaps the most pressing matter was an opportunity to review the Coimbra Group recommendations to the European Commission in its policy paper on the mid-term review of the Horizon 2020 programme (<http://www.coimbra-group.eu/publications/policy-papers>).

A most interesting part of the discussion among the Rectors, the Executive Board and the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Research Support Officers Working Group, focused particularly on the possible structure of Framework Programme 9 (FP9) and how this might differ from Horizon 2020 programme. We know from the European Commission about a possible new Defence Research Programme, ideas to better integrate education and research, and a desire to boost citizen science in an effort to mobilize and involve the public in research to address global challenges. The conclusions of these exchanges converged towards the need to make the voice of the comprehensive research universities and university networks heard during the next stages of formulation of the future European Union (EU) Research and Innovation (R&I) Programme.

On 3 July 2017, the "Lab-Fab-App" report on maximising the impact of EU R&I programme was published. In September 2016 Carlos Moedas, the EU Commissioner for research, science and innovation, mandated a 12-person high-level expert group led by former WTO Director-General Pascal Lamy to set out a vision on how to maximise the impact of future EU R&I programme. The expert group, drawn from academia, industry, and government, was mandated to make recommendations intended to influence the Horizon 2020 work programme 2018-2020 and post-Horizon 2020 FP9. In the days since its publication, the so-called Lamy report has provoked considerable comment from many stakeholders in the world of higher education and research.

The Coimbra Group agreed that its policy would be to take time to broaden the discussion to our researchers before presenting a formal position from the network on the "Lab-Fab-App" recommendations, building on our own recommendations from the mid-term review of Horizon 2020. The analysis needs also to be refined in the months to come particularly by the Coimbra Group experts who are already working on research strategy. Nevertheless, we can already offer some preliminary comments on the "Lab-Fab-App" report and its eleven recommendations and associated actions:

- Action 1 crucially addresses the budget of the post-Horizon 2020 R&I programme: a virtuous doubling of the budget is called for, but numerous voices from the political world have already expressed doubts about the capacity and/or the political will to secure a budget at least equivalent to that of the Horizon 2020 programme. The Coimbra Group will remain mobilized at all levels to make sure that FP9 budget meets our expectations: a reduced budget would seriously damage the success rate (already too low) and all attempts to widen participation (among many other consequences and without even mentioning the possible impact of an embedded Defence research programme).

- Action 2 proposes to boost innovative ideas via the creation of a European Innovation Council (EIC). The EIC is a recurring idea that has already been discussed (for example at the Coimbra Group High-level Seminar on Research Policy: “New Opportunities for University Cooperation”, held in San Servolo, 27-28 October 2016): in the “Lab-Fab-App” report, the position of EIC in the future European R&I programme is still not well defined, in particular with respect to the ERC and to the TRLs. We must recall, as in the recent Coimbra Group policy paper on H2020, that “the consequence of insufficiently low TRL research may, in the long term, [will] lead to [...] the creation of a new ‘valley of death’ at the start of the innovation pipeline”.

- Action 3 calls for the modernisation of education and training systems. This proposal makes perfect sense and Coimbra Group Universities are already active in this field. It is our goal to further promote innovation in education via the very active Education Innovation Working Group, the Doctoral Studies Working Group, and specific Coimbra Group events such as the “Navigate your career!” international training workshop for PhD candidates to be held in Dubrovnik on 15-18 October 2017. The “Lab-Fab-App” report puts strong emphasis on the crucial role of life-long learning: this is also a central topic for Coimbra Group Universities and a High-level Workshop on life-long learning is already in preparation for January 2018, at the European Parliament in Brussels.

- the 4th action proposed by the High-Level Group calls for a R&I programme with pillars driven by purpose and impact: although the research community is now familiar with the three-pillar scheme, it is very interesting that the R&I sector is still perceived as highly segmented, quite contrary to reality. It is proposed that the ERC focuses on the science pillar, while EIC focuses on the innovation pillar. One could ask why not push even further and create a “European Societal Challenges Council” for the global challenges pillar?

- Action 5 proposes to “adopt a mission-oriented, impact-focused approach to address global challenges” by defining a “limited number of large-scale research and innovation missions”. The associated rationale is based on a “by-design” better integration of SSH. The Coimbra Group would wish to emphasise that SSH perspectives need to be included more explicitly in the formulation of calls, and the concept of impact should be adjusted to be appropriate to the kind of contributions that SSH could and should make. A very timely initiative could be the creation of a “Societal Readiness Level” (SRL) system, such as PESTEL or any equivalent that includes political, economic and social factors.

- the 6th and 7th actions propose reducing the number of funding schemes, increasing synergy between instruments and privileging impact over process. The Coimbra Group welcomes any simplification initiatives that support coherence between instruments, geographical spread, widening of participation and the efficient use of resources, as already recommended in the recent policy paper on the mid-term evaluation of Horizon 2020.

- Action 8 is aimed at fostering citizen involvement in the R&I process. European Universities, and in particular the long-established Universities of the Coimbra Group have always been and will remain strongly involved in their local and regional ecosystems. As proof, we could mention the Coimbra Group Universities and their Municipalities gathered at the conference “The University and the City” in Poitiers on 9 June 2016 where they signed the “Poitiers Declaration” which defines a set of objectives and accompanying initiatives to be pursued in the coming years with the aim to making concrete and visible contributions to the development of their local and regional communities (<http://www.coimbra-group.eu/activities/poitiers-declaration>).

- Action 9 is complementary to action 7 as it suggests a simplification process with a “better alignment of national programmes [...] with the EU programme”. This initiative must be taken with great caution, as it may prove counterproductive if it leads to an impoverishment of funding opportunities for research subjects that are not prioritized today, but which could become crucial tomorrow (cf. the refugee crisis that emerged during the Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020 programmes and necessitated adjustments, although unfortunately insufficient). Again, the “innovation pipeline” is complex and a narrowing of its funding band width might “jeopardize future developments and will create missed opportunities both for academia and for industry”, as already stated in Coimbra Group policy paper on Horizon 2020.

- the 10th action proposed by the “Lab-Fab-App” report encourages to open up the European R&I programme by supporting all international partners “as far as they help realise its missions”. A “Euro-centred” vision such as this is potentially very restrictive and in opposition to a win-win global co-development. The Coimbra Group will support any policy guideline that will open current

barriers to international cooperation, and lessons should be learned from current programmes (in particular from Erasmus+ with its Key Actions 107 in Mobility for Higher Education, see recent Coimbra Group position paper on Erasmus+, <http://www.coimbra-group.eu/publications/policy-papers>).

- Action 11 looks to enhance the branding of EU R&I by improved communication of its results and impacts. The Coimbra Group reaffirm that the EU integrative values must indeed be more widely supported, in particular by strengthening the link between Research, Innovation and Education. This link is at the core of the mission of Coimbra Group Universities, which have contributed to the building and development of European societies and identities over many centuries. Impact statements should be strengthened in the field of lifelong learning as a fundamental building block of the integrative capacity of R&I: the Coimbra Group strongly supports calls for a stronger connection between post-Horizon 2020 and post-Erasmus+ programmes where societal aspects of fundamental research and innovation should be better promoted with specific calls related to scientific communication with Society.

As a conclusion, the present analysis shows that the Coimbra Group Universities are already well equipped to respond to the "Lab-Fab-App" recommendations. However, we have to recall, once again, the crucial role of basic research, in particular in the field of SSH. The Lamy report calls for multidisciplinary transnational networks to promote cross-sector, interdisciplinary intra- and extra-European research. Sound familiar? The Coimbra Group University network, along with its industry and community partners are already deeply engaged in tackling societal grand challenges; with better EU funding, we are well placed to help deliver the enhanced impact that the EU desires. In the coming months, the Coimbra Group will remain mobilized to ensure that the voice of the University is heard and will seize the opportunities provided by the Estonian EU Presidency, notably in connection with the forthcoming Research Conference in Tallinn in October 2017.

The document was adopted by the Executive Board of the Coimbra Group on 31 August 2017.

