

The future of funding for research: a mission-oriented approach for better integration of health & social care

Abstract

Integrated care is a concept that can participate in changing the European health actions and that is aimed at every European citizen. It requires research and innovation to achieve efficiency both for service providers and users. Research and innovation can be funded by European programmes when the topics at stake are regarded as societal challenges which concern everyone.

With the Research and Innovation funding programme Horizon 2020 coming to an end, the question is this one: how will the future of funding look like?

Horizon 2020 has been the biggest European Research and Innovation programme ever with €80 billion of funding available between 2014 and 2020, based on a multiannual financial framework. One of the main goals is to break down barriers to enable the creation of a single market of knowledge, research and innovation. The health research part of this programme has defined 7 priorities including innovative health & care systems, working on the concepts of integration of care, personalised medicine and digital transformation in Health and Care for instance.

Horizon Europe is the next European Research and Innovation programme defined for 2021-2027 with a budget of €100 billion – an increase of 29% in comparison with the current programme. The main idea is to keep investing in the field of Research and Innovation to improve daily lives of people and to help solve societal challenges. Several potential research topics have an impact on integrated care, namely health in the digital age and reducing inequalities with skills and competences. Partnerships started under Horizon 2020, such as faster and safer use of health innovations and global health partnerships, will continue with the new programme.

Yet, Horizon Europe should not just focus on ‘patients’, as part of a medical approach, but should also consider the health and social care needs of a wider population (e.g. elderly people or persons with disabilities). Even though the total budget for Research and Innovation has increased in comparison to the previous framework programme, the clusters ‘Inclusive, reflective and innovative society’ and ‘Secure society’ from Horizon 2020 seem to have merged into ‘Inclusive and secure societies’ in Horizon Europe with a lower combined budget. Is that a sign that Europe is reducing its involvement in social inclusion to focus more on security matters? There is, indeed, a need to develop more funding on the social inclusion of persons with support needs and to search for **better ways to combine health and social care**.

One of the lessons learned from Horizon 2020 is that of creating **more impact through mission-orientation and citizen’s involvement**. Indeed, the mission-oriented approach will be at the heart of Horizon Europe. This approach requires defined goals with specific targets and a set time in working to achieve them. So, Horizon Europe aims at pursuing a mission-oriented policy approach which will incorporate policy missions to ensure the effectiveness of Research and Innovation funding, by pursuing clearly defined targets. The missions are conceived as a way for the European Union to better promote the research it funds. And so, they will be decided and co-designed as part of the Horizon Europe strategic planning process.

In this context, it is important for different stakeholders to work closer together. Indeed, missions can create opportunities for multiple actors to have a more efficient cooperation, so this will require better communication and coordination. Most importantly, this could bring about excellence and innovation in partnerships.