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## **Europaforum Northern Sweden opinions on European Research and Innovation 2012-03 – 30**

Europaforum Northern Sweden (EFNS) is a partnership and network for councillors at local and regional level covering the four northernmost regions in Sweden; Norrbotten, Västerbotten, Västernorrland and Jämtland, representing half the geographical area of Sweden.

Our objective is to increase knowledge and awareness of policy at EU level, but especially to increase involvement in shaping EU policies in matters regarding Northern Sweden.

Our opinion represents the positions of elected officials and the comments have been formed in close cooperation between the regions.

### **European Research and Innovation**

EFNS comments refer primarily to the new program Horizon 2020 for Research and Innovation. Relevant for the region is for example that: *Research and innovation help deliver jobs, prosperity, quality of life and global public goods. They generate the scientific and technological breakthroughs needed to tackle the urgent challenges society faces. Investment in this area also leads to businesses opportunities by creating innovative products and services. Although the Union is a global leader in many technologies, it faces increasing competition from traditional competitors and emerging economies alike and must therefore improve its innovation performance. Research and innovation have therefore been placed at the centre of the Europe 2020 strategy to promote smart, sustainable and inclusive growth".* (from H2020)

The reasons for the European Union to increase accessibility and attractiveness of funds focused on research and innovations are obvious, and the aim of simplifying the structure is supported by the EFNS.

EFNS have high expectations for the long term impact of the EU-funded research and innovation policy, as a key to enhancing the potential of the northern sparsely populated areas in Sweden. These expectations are divided into several categories:

- Firstly, the northern regions will be stronger participants based on our experience, expertise and above all the natural conditions in a number of important areas for research and innovation.



- Secondly, the region has specifically strong research and business areas of strategic importance to the NSPA (Northern Sparsely Populated Areas in Northern Europe), as well as for Europe in a broader context. Examples of areas are renewable energy - such as bioenergy based on forest residues and wind power clusters - development and marketing of specific industrial services as automation for processing industries, mining and minerals, forest, automotive, aerospace, tourism, technology, products and services in a cold climate, sustainable food production, water management and the digital industry, such as environmental and energy efficient data storage (Big Data) and innovative SMEs - small and medium-sized enterprises - in the creative industries.

## **Industrial Leadership,**

ENFS also supports H2020 focus on Industrial Leadership: *“making Europe a more attractive location to invest in research and innovation (including eco-innovation), by promoting activities where businesses set the agenda. It will provide major investment in key industrial technologies, maximise the growth potential of European companies by providing them with adequate levels of finance and help innovative SMEs to grow into worldleading companies”.*

For the region it is crucial to strengthen the competitiveness of the leading large and international companies – in close cooperation with the region's SMEs and universities - within research and innovation and thus it is also important to strengthen the European technology platforms with regional relevance, as the platforms for Biofuels, Artemis (in areas as automation in processing industry) and Forestry and the EU raw materials initiative.

Within the EFNS regions a number of development areas have not reached their potential for creating jobs and wealth. Examples include energy efficiency in a cold climate, public services (for example e-services that are highly relevant in sparsely populated areas) and natural resource based value chains in forestry, minerals and hydro power.

In many areas there is a consensus around common political priorities that aims to unlock the potential growth and quality of research and innovation within the EFNS regions. Many of the challenges in northern Sweden are shared by other regions in Europe.

## **Societal challenges**

Societal challenges prioritized in H2020 *“reflects the policy priorities of the Europe 2020 strategy and addresses major concerns shared by citizens in Europe and elsewhere”*(H2020).

The societal challenges in H2020 are in line with the political priorities in the region. The universities in the region have high level competence in education and research that can be further develop into a platform for increased competence and growth in the surrounding community. Collaboration between regions and universities are crucial for EU-funded research and innovation and for this mechanism to expand is stronger involvement of regions and other stakeholders in EU programming needed.



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## Global Challenges

EFNS also supports the focus on international cooperation in H2020, to cope with global challenges such as health, climate and energy and *"to enhance the competitiveness of European industry by promoting the take-up and trade of novel technologies, for instance through the development of worldwide standards and guidelines, and by promoting the acceptance and deployment of European solutions outside Europe"* (H2020)

Large companies in the region are global - as forestry, mining and steel - and the regional universities are involved in international research cooperation. To support and build international networks and business exchange with - for the region - relevant international countries and regions this should also be supported in the Structural Funds and also used to attract more international researchers and companies to the region.

### Projects in H2020, small focused and/or major strategic projects

It should definitely be a balance. Without balance it's a potential risk to reduce the participation of small and medium-sized enterprises in EU-funded research and innovation projects. Large strategic projects with focus on aimed at the strategic objectives of the EU 2020 and the small projects penetrating the market in the short term and hence growth.

### Simplification

Horizon 2020 suggests: *"a single set of rules for participation and dissemination and integration of research and innovation by providing seamless and consistent support from concept to market."* EFNS supports the proposals in Horizon 2020 and this should also be implemented in the Structural Funds, in order to strengthen the synergies between the Structural Funds and H2020 and regional "Smart specialization" strategies.

Many innovative small and medium enterprises in the region are today micro enterprises - not always research-driven - in need of special simplified rules to encourage participation and international cooperation.

### Financial Instruments

The H2020 ambition to create financial instruments covering the entire chain to market is an initiative of great importance when innovative concepts are expected to contribute to a significant knowledge-based growth. Such integration is well in line with the strategic objectives of the EFNS and NSPA.

Integration of and synergies in-between EU funds directed towards research and innovation marks a paradigm shift that can greatly contribute to regional growth.



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