Cross-sectoral data sharing important for research – under the right conditions

Science Europe Response to the European Commission Roadmap on European Data Spaces

Brussels, 31 July 2020

Science Europe welcomes that the European Commission consults stakeholders on its Inception Impact Assessment for a 'Legislative framework for the governance of common European data spaces'. Science Europe Member Organisations, major national research funding and performing organisations, have a vast experience as users and producers of data. Science Europe believes that sharing their collective knowledge with the Commission will help strengthen the European research and innovation (R&I) landscape and serve society at large.

Science Europe would like to draw the attention to four main aspects related to the R&I sector:

1. Importance of cross-sectoral data-sharing for research and innovation

Science Europe is pleased to note that with the upcoming legislative proposal on the governance of common European data spaces, the Commission intends improve cross-sectoral data access, not only for the economic sector, but also for R&I. Data from all sectors have cross-cutting value for R&I and consequently for society at large. The current COVID-19 crisis demonstrates the importance of data. They not only support health research, but are also essential, for example, to counter-balance fake news and address the social and economic challenges caused by the crisis.

2. Horizon Europe funding needs to benefit the research and innovation sector

Science Europe takes note of the Commission's intention to invest in modern data infrastructures with money from, among other sources, the future Framework Programme for R&I, Horizon Europe. Science Europe promotes data accessibility and interoperability through federated infrastructures, as demonstrated by its support and engagement in the development of the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC). Modern data infrastructures are necessary to effectively maximise the use of public investments. These foster the use and re-use of data, within and across sectors, thus increasing their value. It is crucial to ensure that any investments funded by Horizon Europe primarily benefit the R&I sector.

Science Europe
Rue de la Science 14, 1040 Brussels, Belgium
Tel: +32 (0)2 226 03 00 | Fax: +32 (0)2 226 03 01 | Email: office@scienceeurope.org | www.scienceeurope.org

3. Maintain sectoral data-sharing standards while ensuring interoperability

Science Europe continuously emphasises the importance of defining appropriate rules and standards for access, use, and re-use of data. The key issue at hand is to ensure interoperability among data spaces without relaxing sectoral data-sharing standards. Highly data-dependent sectors, such as the R&I sector, already have well-functioning standards in place. It is important to respect these existing standards and the authorities should avoid introducing new standards that are too broad. In the R&I sector, the FAIR principles (making data findable, accessible, interoperable, and re-usable) as well as the principle 'as open as possible, as closed as necessary' are well-established among researchers and research institutions.

4. EOSC as central point for standard setting and best practice sharing in research and innovation

The need and purpose of creating new bodies to exchange best practices and issue guidelines should be assessed sector by sector. An overview of central points for all data spaces should be kept to guarantee coherence at EU level. In the R&I sector, EOSC was purposefully established as the federation of existing infrastructures, instead of creating new ones. Some key principles and lessons learned can be used in developing bodies for other sectors, such as the essential conditions for interoperability and engagement with all types of potential users from an early stage. In the R&I sector, EOSC will allow researchers to use and re-use data, and help stakeholders exchange best practices and issue guidelines for data sharing.

About Science Europe

Science Europe represents major public organisations that fund or perform excellent, ground-breaking research in Europe. It brings together the expertise of some of the largest and most respected European research organisations to jointly push the frontiers of how scientific research is produced and delivers benefits to society. Science Europe's 36 members manage a large variety of national and international funding programmes, from bottom-up schemes to mission-oriented research. They collectively invest €18 billion in 27 countries each year.