Strengthening SSH in co-design and co-creation of the Horizon Europe work programmes 2025-2027

The hidden treasures of SSH-integration

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Horizon Europe legislation defines three types of impact tracked through Key Impact Pathways

1. Creating high-quality new knowledge
2. Strengthening human capital in R&I
3. Fostering diffusion of knowledge and Open Science

Scientific Impact

4. Addressing EU policy priorities & global challenges through R&I
5. Delivering benefits & impact via R&I missions
6. Strengthening the uptake of R&I in society
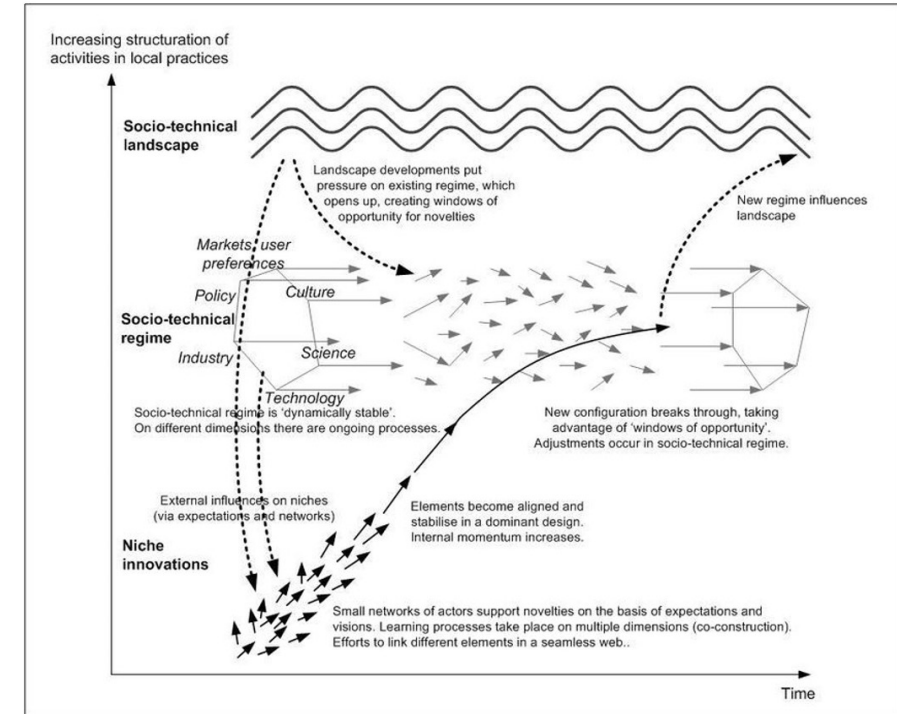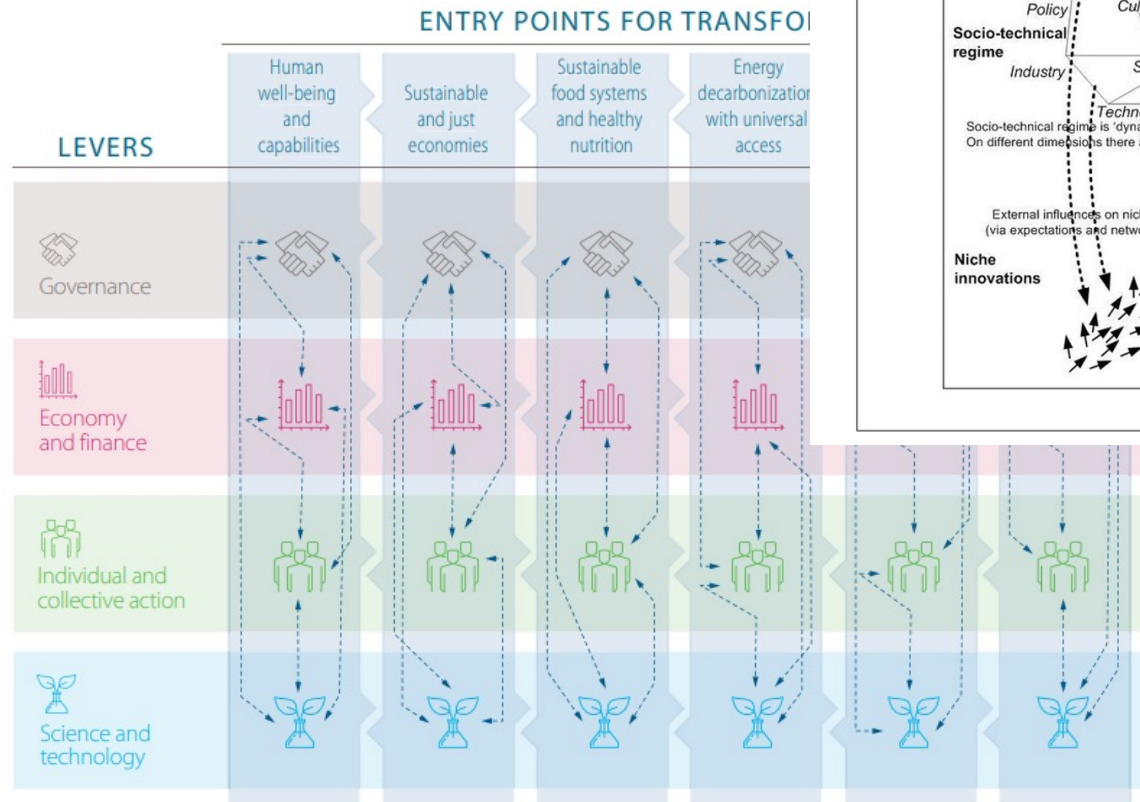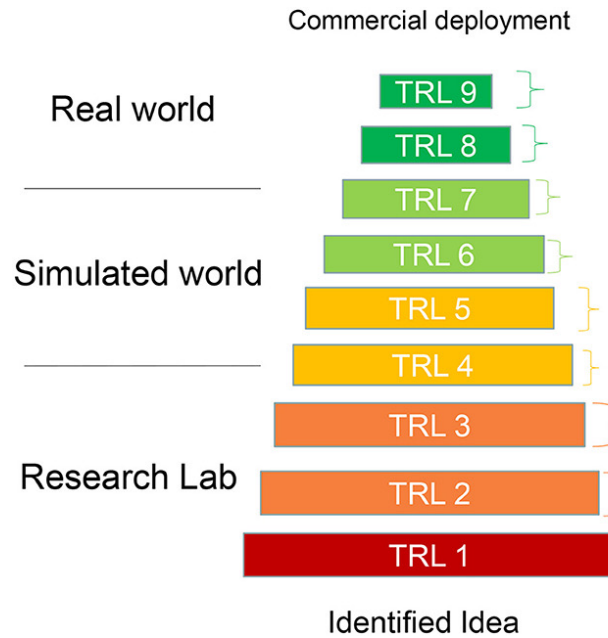
Societal Impact

7. Generating innovation-based growth
8. Creating more and better jobs
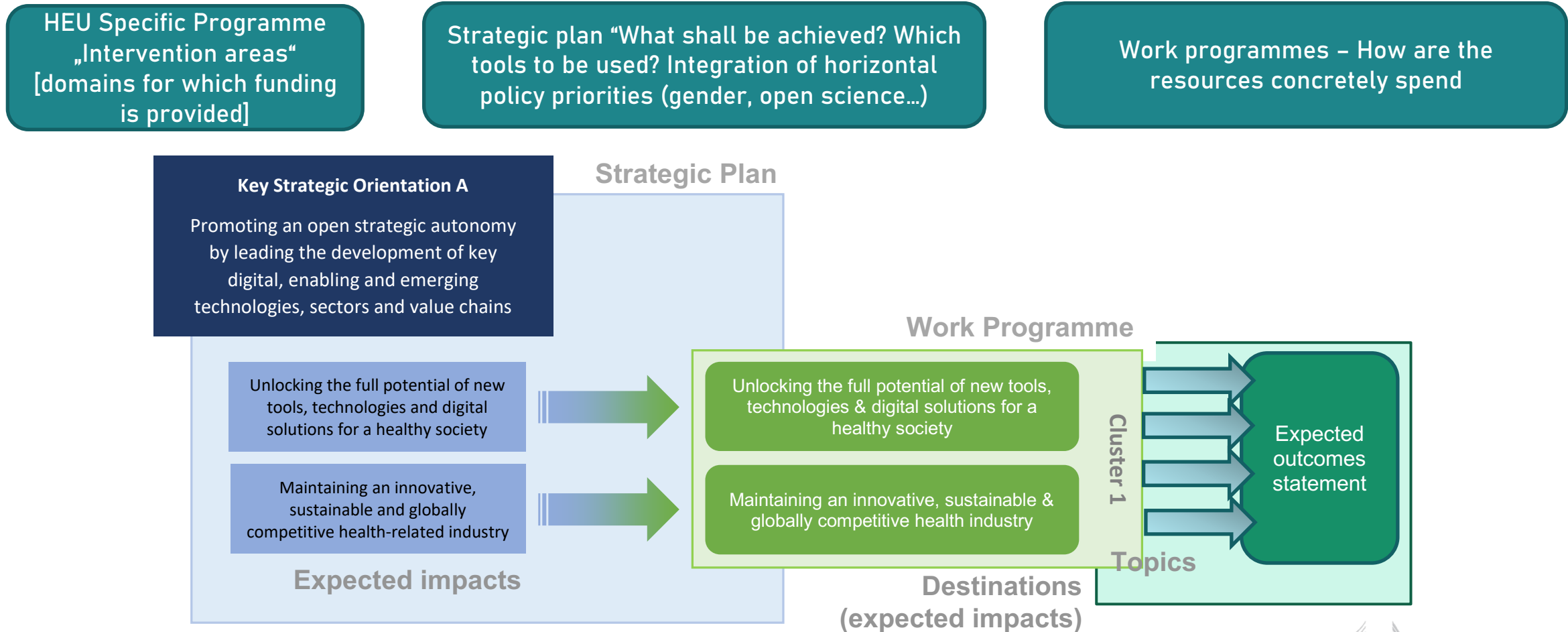9. Leveraging investments in R&I

Economic Impact

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Thought models of societal change and impact

Societal impact : From policy priorities to work programme – example

Cluster 1

HEU Specific Programme „Intervention areas" [domains for which funding is provided]

Strategic plan "What shall be achieved? Which tools to be used? Integration of horizontal policy priorities (gender, open science…)

Work programmes – How are the resources concretely spend

Strategic Plan

Key Strategic Orientation A

Promoting an open strategic autonomy by leading the development of key digital, enabling and emerging technologies, sectors and value chains

Unlocking the full potential of new tools, technologies and digital solutions for a healthy society

Maintaining an innovative, sustainable and globally competitive health-related industry

Expected impacts

Work Programme

Unlocking the full potential of new tools, technologies & digital solutions for a healthy society

Maintaining an innovative, sustainable & globally competitive health industry

Cluster 1

Destinations (expected impacts)

Topics

Expected outcomes statement

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Do outcome statements define overly prescriptive topics?

A good outcome statement describes the effect of the project's output(s) on a stakeholder group

- It does **not describe the output nor the activities** to create the output ! -> not prescriptive and not limited ‚academic freedom' – It provides however ‚***directionality***'
- With regards to tools & scientific methods & technologies used such outcome statement is not prescriptive
- Frequent confusion in the use of the term 'prescriptive' used as *opposite to thematically fully open (like ERC)* - 'providing directionality' would be the correct term
- Applicants are asked to describe a '**pathway to impact**' – i.e. from the projects' outputs via the topic's outcomes to the expected impact of the destination (strategic plan)

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SSH integration – formal and informal

A commitment to co-creation and co-design for strategies and workprogrammes

- **Co-design with stakeholders**
  - R&I days notably 2019 for 1st strategic plan and missions (-> COVID)
  - Horizon2020 - Green Deal Call (during lock-downs) 'feedback on draft topics' (+6000 responses)
  - Consultation on 2nd strategic plan 2025-27 (hard to reach out to new stakeholders)
  - Plan Q1/2024 Feed-back opportunity on 'orientations or expected outcomes in each 'destination'
- **Co-creation among Commission services**
  - Give DG Employment a possibility to raise the role of skills in the context of technologies
  - Balance conflicting policy interest (bioenergy – environment; inclusiveness of transition processes) in the formulation of outcome statements
- **Response to topics**
  - Work on stakeholder's interests, capacities, systemic barriers to work with the project outputs
  - Other SSH elements in a convincing 'pathway to impact'

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Role and ambition of EU-Missions

Five Missions with ambitious 2030-targets with inherent social dimensions – but shall they

- **Create future growth markets with strong public interest dimensions**? (see Mazzucato 2013 ‚Entrepreneurial state')
- Or achieve a **public interest related objective by mobilsing all ‚levers for transformative change**'? (Direction of most policy discussion OECD, MS)

-> very different roles for SSH

- All recognise that **more mobilisation of non-Horizon funds is needed**.
- Research stakeholders and Member States request to limit Horizon funding to 'proper' R&I.

-> **opportunity to strengthen SSH in Mission context**

- Can universities / RI play other roles to achieve mission objectives than doing research?
- Locally convening actors and launching local action – while joining 'mission platforms'

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Further highlighting SSH?

SSH-flagging of topics

- Still providing value added?

Societal readiness - concept

- Internal guidance since 2022 – but not taken up for development of WP 2023/24
- Idea: Integrate SR in the formulation of outcome statements ('theory development', 'experimentation to develop SR', 'analysis & recommendation') -> burdens the topic drafter
- Cluster 5 intends to experiment in WP 2025 with a model that invites applicant to reflect on SR of their technology

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The 3-leg approach to 'Do no harm' in Horizon

How might *research & innovation activities* and the *funding provided for them* harm environmental policy objectives ?

By the way they are undertaken (methods applied)

By the R&I results / outputs notably in case of ‚scale-up'

By the orientation the funding made available provides for future development (‚directionality')

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Controversial discussions notably with EP

Criticism

- Research and Innovation are not economic or investment activities. The taxonomy regulation defining ‚Do no significant harm' cannot be applied to non-economic activities.
- Potentially DNSH limits ‚academic freedom'
- ‚Compromise' in 2021 – reflections of applicants are invited but are not taken into account during evaluation
- Triggered further criticism ‚why ask if not taken into account' & ‚why ask twice within technical part and ethics self-assessment'
- Current in different context: EP motion to limit application of DNSH to projects with environmental ambition

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Approach 2025-27

Integration in standard 'ethics' procedures

- Need to develop the 'environmental ethics' dimension

- Need to guide / train evaluator & ethics experts

- Need to adjust application forms and their IT implementation

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Thank you

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