



Special Session Proposal

Local mission approach as a challenge based multi-level building block for sustainable development

Organisers:

Ramojus Reimeris, ramojus.reimeris@ec.europa.eu

Dimitrios Pontikakis, dimitrios.pontikakis@ec.europa.eu

European Commission Joint Research Centre

Abstract

Today, complexity permeates every aspect of our lives. Interconnectivity has brought both incredible advancements and unforeseen challenges. Poly-crisis, a simultaneous occurrence of multiple crises, threatens stability on environmental, societal and economic fronts. In the face of these challenges, achieving sustainability becomes paramount, requiring us to rethink our actions, consumption patterns, and overall approach to development, rethinking ambition of public policy, from dealing with incremental change, to dealing with transformational change (European Commission, 2020; Bianchi et al., forthcoming; Pontikakis et al., 2022).

Public policy is increasingly expected to anticipate, orient and coordinate responses among various stakeholders and levels (Borras and Edler, 2020). There is a large mismatch between the magnitude and systemic extent of mounting local challenges and the capabilities of regional and local administrations to provide comprehensive responses. There is no single recipe for becoming more transformative, as governance systems differ in opportunities and challenges. Understanding each system is crucial before introducing transformative innovation policies (Janssen et al., 2023). Among others, the mismatch brings to the fore the need for greater coordination between levels of governance and across administrative silos.

A mission-driven approach is a well-established practice to contribute to addressing sustainability issues (Mazzucato, 2018). Missions come as a co-ordinated package of policy and regulatory measures, specifically tailored to mobilise innovation to address well-defined societal objectives or wicked societal problems within a defined

timeframe. While missions tends to be general one-size-fits-all approach, local missions are designed to address specific challenges unique to a particular location (Larrue, 2021). There is a need for a socially inclusive and territorially focused approach to policy-making, particularly in the context of heightened geopolitical tensions, in policy areas such as energy and defence (Schwaag Serger and Soete, 2023). They tackle the issues from a local perspective with the participation of local stakeholders that can offer approaches with continuous ownership with the focus on local problems faced by large cross-sections of citizens and can therefore mobilise stakeholders who are usually underrepresented in policy discussions (Laranja et al., 2022).

Missions can help develop societal challenge-oriented policy (and funding) priorities which can usefully complement other priority setting methods. Therefore, they can act as an organising principle for collaboration in complex and fragmented decision-making structures. The future of Cohesion Policy could follow the challenge-led localised approach as a potential organizing principle. This approach aims to address diverse challenges and promote place-based development pathways. Implementing this approach would require substantial investments and governance capacity (Molica et al., forthcoming).

Topics of interest include but are not limited to the following:

- design and implementation of local and regional missions and of other challenge-based approaches for tackling societal and technological problems
- system change in local and regional contexts, including the use of missions (or similar challenge-oriented approaches) in Smart Specialisation Strategies, Just Transition Plans, Integrated Territorial Investments, etc.
- addressing the intensifying challenge of multi-level governance in practice
- new or improved approaches to the establishment of public-private partnerships and other forms of coordination
- the development of capabilities for local missions in public administrations or among other ecosystem actors (e.g. universities)
- methodologies for stakeholder engagement in local missions
- policy intelligence (e.g. indicators, reviews and other forms of evaluation) for local missions
- linking of missions with the development of transformative policy mixes

References:

Bianchi, G., et al. (forthcoming), Innovation for place-based transformations : ACTIONbook to build partnerships for a fair green and digital transitions, forthcoming

Borrás, S., Edler, J. The roles of the state in the governance of socio-technical systems' transformation, Research Policy, Volume 49, Issue 5, 2020, 103971, ISSN 0048-7333, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.respol.2020.103971>.

European Commission. The European Green Deal, Brussels, 11.12.2019, [EUR-Lex - 52019DC0640 - EN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](#)

Janssen, M., Wanzenböck, I., Fünfschilling, L., Pontikakis, D. Capacities for transformative innovation in public administrations and governance systems: Evidence from pioneering policy practice, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2023, doi: 10.2760/220273, JRC131490

Laranja M., Perianez-Forte I. and Reimeris R. Discovery processes for transformative innovation policy, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2022, doi:10.2760/763572, JRC131330

Larrue, P. The design and implementation of mission-oriented innovation policies: A new systemic policy approach to address societal challenges, OECD Science, Technology and Industry Policy Papers, 2021, No. 100, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/3f6c76a4-en>

Mazzucato M. Mission-oriented innovation policies: challenges and opportunities, Industrial and Corporate Change, Volume 27, Issue 5, October 2018, Pages 803–815

Molica F., Pontikakis D., Miedzinski M. Why a challenge-oriented approach is a good match for the needs and challenges of EU Cohesion Policy, forthcoming

Pontikakis, D., Gonzalez Vazquez, I., Bianchi, G., Ranga, L., Marques Santos, A., Reimeris, R., Mifsud, S., Morgan, K., Madrid Gonzalez, C., Stierna, J., 2022. Partnership for Regional Innovation: Playbook. European Commission, Joint Research Centre, Seville, Spain

Schwaag Serger, S. and Soete, L., Changing innovation policies for territorial transformation, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2023, JRC136125