

The Innovation Principle

Stimulating economic recovery

Questions and Answers

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What do you mean with innovation?	<i>Innovation is the process of translating discoveries and ideas into technologies, processes, products and services and bringing these to market so that they can benefit society. As such, it is vital for consumers, citizens and companies of all types and investors in all sectors.</i>
Why is innovation so important?	<i>Innovation is the single most important driver of societal prosperity and is indispensable for sustainable development and economic growth. Without innovation European industry will lose competitive advantage and attractiveness for investment and steadily fall behind other economies.</i>
Why do you address innovation at the EU level?	<i>Prosperity concerns the life of everybody and is a common good. To achieve it, investors, managers, and entrepreneurs need to be innovative and take business risks. Governments can play an important role by supporting a business environment that encourages innovation. In Europe, such “enabling conditions” are mainly shaped and guaranteed through EU policies.</i>
Why is the Innovation Principle necessary?	<i>Innovation has been and remains a high priority for the EU, however the focus has generally been more on funding than the regulatory environment. Nevertheless, over the past two decades, the EU institutions have put in place important and far-reaching risk assessment and risk management functions. The Innovation Principle proposes to continue this development by establishing a new and positive policy-making framework in support of innovation. It seeks to balance a reliance on hazard based regulatory approaches, geared to removing or avoiding unknown risks, with encouragement of innovation as an equally important objective for the EU.</i>
Why so much emphasis on risk? Should safety not be the main objective?	<i>Safety and security are essential elements of prosperity. Nonetheless, without risk we would not have progress in areas such as transport, telecommunications or medicine. There is no innovation without risk and these risks need to be accepted, understood and managed if society is to reap the benefits & Europe is to be technologically competitive.</i>
Is the Innovation Principle intended to undermine or attack the Precautionary Principle?	<i>No. The Precautionary Principle is important and there for a purpose. The Innovation Principle is intended to create a positive framework for European innovation, providing a way to balance precaution and innovation for wider social benefit. Without such a balance, innovation and progress will suffer, with no demonstrable benefit for human health or the environment. The Precautionary Principle and the Innovation principle are complementary and both essential.</i>

<p>Isn't this just another case of industry lobbying for innovation, without regard for human or environmental safety?</p>	<p><i>The Innovation Principle is intended to support social progress and economic prosperity through encouraging innovation. Seen in this way, it is in everyone's benefit. Where there is real danger and unacceptable risk, precautionary considerations should be uppermost. The Innovation Principle does not set out to support innovation irrespective of its impact on health or the environment. It seeks to support an evidence-based approach, relying on scientific excellence, which is accountable, proportionate, balanced and reviewable.</i></p>
<p>Who is behind the Innovation Principle?</p>	<p><i>The Innovation Principle was conceived and developed by members of the European Regulation and Innovation Forum (at that time known as "European Risk Forum", ERF).</i></p>
<p>What is the European Regulation and Innovation Forum?</p>	<p><i>The European Regulation and Innovation Forum (ERIF) is an expert-led, not-for-profit think tank, dedicated to improving the regulatory framework of the European Union's institutions through Better Regulation. The ERIF pursues a strict cross-sectoral ("horizontal") approach in its promotion of good principle and practices for risk governance and does not advocate for any individual industry or product. Further information on the ERIF is available on its web site: www.eriforum.eu.</i></p>
<p>Why is the Innovation Principle not more specific?</p>	<p><i>The ERF's original letter to the three EU Presidents, which was signed by twelve CEOs of leading innovative companies from a range of different industrial sectors, aimed to initiate a process of support and encouragement for innovation. The letter and attached recommendations marked the start of a process, and not the end of one. It will take time, effort and vision to establish the Innovation Principle as a European policy framework, and stakeholders, experts and policy makers are encouraged to contribute to this process.</i></p>
<p>Writing a letter to Presidents of the EU institutions is a good start, but won't the Innovation Principle just be forgotten after the Summit?</p>	<p><i>Yes indeed. The Innovation Principle letter to the three EU Presidents alone will not of itself accomplish the objective. The ERIF and its member organizations are committed to building on this initiative, and include other stakeholder, to give the Innovation Principle the momentum it needs to have a positive impact on EU policy making.</i></p>
<p>Which companies signed the letter?</p>	<p><i>The CEOs of the following companies have signed the letter: BASF, Bayer AG, Curis, The Dow Chemical Company, Dow AgroSciences, Dow Corning, Henkel, IBM, Novartis, Philips, Solvay and Syngenta. Other leading innovative companies from a range of industrial sectors have also indicated their support for the initiative and an interest to participate in the ongoing process of establishing it as a corner stone of EU policy.</i></p>
<p>Why didn't more company CEOs sign the letter.</p>	<p><i>It was important to move forward with this initial strong body of support for the Innovation Principle before the EU Council's Innovation summit started that year. With that impressive start, the ERIF is confident that other companies and sectors will contribute to the ongoing process of establishing the Innovation Principle in EU Policy.</i></p>
<p>Which industrial sectors are represented by the CEOs who signed the letter to the three EU Presidents?</p>	<p><i>CEOs representing the chemicals, pharmaceuticals, nutrition, materials, consumer products, electronics, biotechnology, crop protection and agricultural sciences sectors signed the letter.</i></p>
<p>How can I learn more about this initiative? How can I signal my interest to participate?</p>	<p><i>The ERIF is coordinating the initiative. You can contact the ERIF at info@eriforum.eu. It may also be useful to liaise directly with peers at companies already participating in the initiative.</i></p>