

EANM Feedback to the European Commission Call for Evidence on Horizon Europe – European Partnerships to be implemented as Joint Undertakings

General comments

The European Association of Nuclear Medicine (EANM) welcomes the European Commission's initiative to streamline the future European Partnerships landscape under Horizon Europe 2028–2034 and to establish a coherent framework for Joint Undertakings (JUs) through a Single Basic Act. The objective of reducing fragmentation, improving synergies and aligning partnerships with broader European competitiveness goals is timely and appropriate.

From the perspective of nuclear medicine, radiopharmaceutical innovation and medical radioisotope supply, Europe faces a unique strategic challenge. Radioisotopes are critical for cancer diagnosis, cancer treatment, cardiovascular diseases, neurological disorders and a growing number of precision medicine applications. At the same time, the supply chain remains highly complex, involving research reactors, isotope producers, radiopharmaceutical manufacturers, healthcare providers, regulators and clinical research networks.

The recently launched **European Radioisotopes Valley Initiative (ERVI)** provides an excellent example of an area where the Joint Undertaking model could generate substantial European added value by bringing together research, industrial deployment, workforce development, infrastructure investments and long-term strategic coordination.

Importance of the Joint Undertaking model

EANM believes that Joint Undertakings are particularly suitable for sectors where:

- Long innovation cycles require sustained investment over many years;
- Public and private actors must coordinate closely;
- Strategic infrastructures are essential;
- Significant regulatory and translational barriers exist;
- European technological sovereignty and resilience are policy objectives.

These characteristics strongly apply to the radioisotope and radiopharmaceutical ecosystem. The development of new radiopharmaceuticals often requires coordinated investments across the entire value chain, from radionuclide production and research reactors to clinical trials, regulatory science, manufacturing capacity and healthcare implementation. Traditional project-based funding mechanisms cannot always provide the continuity necessary to support these interconnected activities.

Recommendations

1. Ensure that health innovation ecosystems can benefit from institutionalised partnerships

Future Joint Undertakings should not be limited to traditional industrial sectors but should also support strategic health innovation ecosystems where Europe can achieve scientific leadership, industrial growth and societal impact.

The radiopharmaceutical sector illustrates how health research simultaneously contributes to:

- Cancer and chronic disease outcomes;
- Advanced manufacturing;
- Nuclear technologies;
- Supply chain resilience;
- Strategic autonomy;
- High-skilled employment.

The future partnership portfolio should therefore fully recognise healthcare innovation as a competitiveness driver.

2. Support the development of the European Radioisotopes Valley Initiative

EANM encourages the Commission to consider mechanisms allowing initiatives such as the European Radioisotopes Valley to benefit from structured partnership models and long-term governance arrangements.

The European radioisotope ecosystem requires coordinated action on:

- Production capacity and diversification;
- Research infrastructures;
- Innovation and translational research;
- Clinical evidence generation;
- Regulatory science;
- Workforce skills and training;
- Cross-border cooperation.

A Joint Undertaking-like approach could provide the critical mass and continuity necessary to address these challenges effectively.

3. Maintain sufficient flexibility within the Single Basic Act

While EANM supports harmonised governance rules and simplification efforts, future Joint Undertakings must retain sufficient flexibility to address sector-specific characteristics.

The healthcare and radiopharmaceutical sectors operate under highly specialised regulatory frameworks involving radiation protection requirements. Excessive standardisation could reduce the effectiveness of partnerships operating in highly regulated scientific environments.

4. Strengthen the role of clinical and scientific stakeholders

Future governance models should ensure meaningful participation of scientific societies, research organisations, academic medical centres and patient representatives.

In radiopharmaceutical innovation, successful translation from research to patient care depends on close collaboration between industry and the clinical community. Scientific societies such as EANM play a critical role in evidence generation, education, guideline development and implementation of innovations in healthcare systems.

5. Promote strategic European autonomy in critical medical radioisotopes

The EU currently occupies a leading global position in medical radioisotope production and nuclear medicine research. However, vulnerabilities remain regarding production capacity, aging infrastructure, workforce shortages and dependencies across parts of the supply chain.

Future Joint Undertakings should explicitly contribute to strengthening Europe's resilience and strategic autonomy in critical medical technologies and materials, including radioisotopes used for diagnosis and therapy.

Conclusion

EANM supports the Commission's objective of creating a more coherent and impact-oriented framework for European Partnerships and Joint Undertakings under Horizon Europe 2028–2034.

The future framework should preserve flexibility, encourage strong participation from scientific and clinical communities, and enable strategic ecosystems such as the European Radioisotopes Valley Initiative to benefit from long-term partnership structures.

Given the growing importance of radiopharmaceuticals for precision medicine, cancer care and European industrial competitiveness, EANM believes that the radioisotope value chain represents a compelling case for enhanced European-level coordination and investment through future partnership instruments.