



EASN position regarding the participation of Academia in the European Partnership for Clean Aviation (EPCA)

In the last two years, there has been essential progress in establishing the European Partnership of Clean Aviation. This was achieved through close collaboration between the various stakeholders from industry, research organisations, the European Commission, Clean Sky 2 and Academia. However, essential aspects to ensure a sustainable and effective participation of Academia in this partnership need still to be clarified. As the preparatory phase of Horizon Europe is coming to an end soon, EASN calls for a quick clarification of these aspects and declares its readiness to proactively contribute to this process.

A. Participation to EPCA

- The representation of Academia to the Founding Members of EPCA is marginal as hardly any University could commit to become Founding Member of EPCA due to significant uncertainties on the obligations connected to such a commitment. These uncertainties include the exact definition of the acceptable forms of in-kind contributions or the prospective requirement for a potential financial contribution of Academia to the administrative cost of EPCA. In addition to the uncertainties referring to the obligations by committing to become a Founding or Associated Member in EPCA, it remains also uncertain whether any benefit should be expected from being a Member. This goes along with the lack of a dedicated policy with regard to the participation of Academia in EPCA in general.
- With respect to the European Commission's strategy on EPCA governance, EASN is welcoming the legislative proposal (Single Basic Act, SBA) on Public Private Partnerships that foresees a seat for Academia in the respective Governing Board. This should be supported by a corresponding role in the Technical Committee, charged with the preparation and monitoring of work programmes. The latest SBA draft lacks a sensible implementation of the intended strategy, as not any single university can be in a position, nor have the mandate, to represent European Academia in these bodies. This role can only be taken by an Association offering a wide Academia representation. EASN, which has been established with the support of the Commission about twenty years ago for representing Academia at European level in aviation research matters, declares its readiness to undertake this responsibility for the entire duration of EPCA.

B. Preparing the implementation of EPCA

- It is acknowledged that EPCA is an Industry-led Program, aiming at the development of disruptive demonstrators with significant impact. To achieve this, the call structure of EPCA should remain flexible enough to allow for properly addressing specific research needs which cannot be foreseen at this preparatory stage of a ten years long Program. Also a sufficiently low funding limit for respective call topics is essential to allow for the exploitation of the skills of Academia and SMEs on facing research needs which will only become visible in the course of realizing EPCA's technological objectives. The proposed tool of "cascade funding" appears to be promising with respect to these aspects, yet needs clarification as well as clearly defined control mechanisms before being adopted.
- The concept of Thematic Topics, established in Clean Sky 2 with the proactive involvement of EASN, has proven to be a very useful tool, encouraging a highly fruitful participation of Academia and SMEs in research, aiming to increase innovation in the Clean Sky 2 Program. EASN highly recommends to keep such a tool, which does not require large budgets, but ensures focused cooperation between the research stakeholders in aeronautics for developing disruptive technological solutions of increased impact.