An Interview with Ms. Julie Leroy

President of the Science Policy Council of the Brussels-Capital Region (CPSRBC), Innovation Expert at Agoria

What are the missions of the CPSRBC?

The CPSRBC is an independent advisory body to the Brussels government that brings together experts in research and innovation in the region: universities, colleges, research centres, and social partners (Agoria, Essenscia, BRUXEO, trade unions, etc.). It advises the Brussels government in the preparation of its science policy and keeps a critical, constructive eye on this policy.

A true forum for exchange between all its members, the CPSRBC formulates advice and recommendations at the request of the regional government or ministerial cabinets, such as that of Minister Barbara Trachte, responsible for science and innovation. For instance, Ms. Trachte presented her “Shifting Economy. Brussels” initiative and suggested that gender equality in the RDI sector could be the subject of an advisory report.

Requests for advice by the government or cabinet are usually made for the implementation of new legislations affecting RDI policy, as well as for the implementation of new political plans, such as the regional operational planning for the European Regional Development Funds. The CPSRBC also initiates its own advisory reports.



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How do you view regional policy on science, research, and innovation?

Brussels-Capital is recognised by the European Commission as a European leader in innovation. It excels with its vibrant innovation ecosystem in SMEs, strong collaborative dynamics, a solid knowledge base, and a high-performing scientific fabric with highly cited publications and strong scientific collaborations. Furthermore, Brussels has a solid expertise base in ICT, making it a digital capital.

Innoviris, the Brussels-Capital Region's innovation funding agency, plays a central role in granting aid to innovative companies. It is a highly efficient, available, and competent player that manages resources well. However, three main challenges remain: the difficulty of transferring research results into industrial applications, limiting job creation; the challenge for start-ups to scale up in production and international markets; and the difficulty for companies to retain and recruit talent. The CPSRBC is working with Innoviris to address these issues.



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What advice have you given recently?

We have worked on a memorandum to present our concerns to politicians and the future Brussels government. Other recent advisory reports have addressed the 2021-2027 ERDF programming for the Brussels-Capital Region, the 2021-2027 Regional Innovation Plan (RIP), and the Smart Specialisation Strategy. For the latter, the council also contributed to the development of a monitoring tool.

Additionally, Advice 58 on regional gender equality policy in RDI made recommendations to improve gender balance in research programme evaluation panels and within the programmes themselves. Since 2001, the CPSRBC has issued nearly sixty advisory

reports.

How are Agoria and the Brussels-Capital Region working together to encourage scientific research and innovation?

As a federation of technology companies, Agoria actively promotes innovation and collaborates with training organisations such as Technicity and Digitalcity to develop training programs tailored to Brussels' challenges. Agoria also participates in the "Sustain.Brussels" project (part of the European Digital Innovation Hub initiative) to support companies in optimally using artificial intelligence to develop their business.

Agoria's Brussels-based board of directors, led by René Konings, assists local companies in tackling various challenges. Additionally, Agoria supports the industry with studies like "Digital4Climate," which showed that while 5G increases data processing levels, it significantly reduces energy consumption. Another study, "Be the Change," focused on future jobs and skill development, influencing training programs.

Ultimately, Agoria guides the Brussels government's decisions in the interest of businesses, enabling them to better contribute to the region's development. A true virtuous cycle!