



EUA

European University Association

EUA MEMBER CONSULTATION

A CONTRIBUTION TO THE HORIZON 2020 MID-TERM REVIEW

DECEMBER 2016

Copyright © European University Association 2016

All rights reserved.

This information may be freely used and copied for non-commercial purposes, provided that the source is acknowledged (©European University Association).

European University Association asbl

Avenue de l'Yser 24 · 1040 Brussels, Belgium

info@eua.be · Tel: +32-2 230 55 44 · Fax: +32-2 230 57 51

EUA **CORE MESSAGES** AND
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR
THE MID-TERM **REVIEW**
OF **HORIZON 2020** AND
BEYOND

EUA core messages and recommendations

The EUA's contribution to the mid-term review of Horizon 2020 brings together a set of core messages addressed to EU institutions, national policy makers and universities with a view to improve the competitiveness and efficiency of the EU's leading research funding programme and to inform the design of the next generation of the Framework Programme.

The messages are supported by the results of EUA's consultation of its membership on Horizon 2020 and EUA's broader work on university research and funding. They encapsulate the view of the university sector as a key stakeholder in the European research and innovation landscape.

The European university sector is a staunch supporter of Horizon 2020, which is a highly successful programme with ambitious objectives. EU-level funding for research and innovation based on grants and open competitive calls creates unparalleled added value and remains paramount to retain scientific talent and boost Europe's global competitiveness. The university sector also supports the European Commission's overarching goals of open science and open innovation, as well as the European Research Area's (ERA) aims to develop an open labour market for researchers and encourage gender equality in science.

By focusing on excellence, attractiveness and efficiency, the following messages and proposed actions seek to strengthen these goals and to reinforce the Framework Programme's capacity to deliver on the grand challenges Europe is facing today.

The core messages and recommendations developed by EUA following its member consultation on Horizon 2020 cover two broad areas: (i) Horizon 2020 leading principles and main ideas, and (ii) Horizon 2020 funding and modalities.

1. Horizon 2020 leading principles and main ideas

Prioritising excellence, multidisciplinary and collaborative research

Excellent fundamental and frontier research, whatever the magnitude or category, must remain at the centre of Horizon 2020 and its successor programme. This is demonstrated, for example, by the success of the European Research Council and its impact on science in Europe and, more generally, the overall impact of excellent fundamental research on Europe's society and economy.

Only excellent, multidisciplinary and collaborative university-based research can provide answers to the grand, interdependent challenges of today, for example, in the areas of energy or climate change. Moreover, collaborative research projects safeguard the European added value and further strengthen the European Research Area. Excellence, collaboration and multidisciplinary therefore need to remain at the heart of the EU Framework Programmes.

Action for EU institutions

Keep excellent, collaborative and multidisciplinary research projects at the core of the EU Framework Programme for Research & Innovation.

Broadening innovation and committing to long-term investments in research

The notion of Technology Readiness Levels (TRLs) is essentially based on a simplified linear model of innovation. TRLs do not thus capture the full complexity and bandwidth of innovation and, most importantly, exclude non-technological forms of innovation generated by fundamental and applied research, particularly in the Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH).

Broaden and enrich the traditional notion of innovation in order to address all areas of innovation, spanning across the fields of science, technology and SSH.

Action for EU institutions

Innovation is not a linear process. Innovation, particularly disruptive innovation based on fundamental and applied research, needs sustainable, long-term public funding while close-to-market innovation should be financed by the private sector.

Actions for EU institutions

Provide long-term public funding at national and European levels for incremental and disruptive innovation based on fundamental and applied research.

Establish clear regulatory frameworks for incremental, close-to-market innovation and leave investments fully to the private sector, including venture capital.

Integrating SSH disciplines further and opening up research agenda setting

The SSH ensure and increase the societal understanding and acceptance of technology and science. SSH expertise is furthermore crucial for addressing great challenges such as migration and radicalisation. The strategic research agenda for societal challenges and the next EU Framework Programme hence need to be defined jointly by all relevant stakeholders, including SSH disciplines and civil society.

Action for EU and national authorities

Support the full inclusion and build on the existing strengths of SSH disciplines in all funding programmes at European and national levels.

Open up strategic research agenda setting to all relevant stakeholders, including SSH researchers and civil society.

Action for EU institutions

Widening participation

While scientific excellence and the intrinsic quality of project proposals must remain at the centre of proposal evaluation, instruments for widening participation need to be reinforced. Funding sources for capacity building need to be broadened, including, amongst others, structural funds at the European level and national funds at the level of member states, and their interaction strengthened in order to enhance the competitiveness of Europe and its research and innovation (R&I) landscape in a balanced and durable manner.

Action for EU institutions

Keep scientific excellence at the core of the EU Framework Programme for R&I and minimise discrepancies across the EU by broadening funding sources for capacity building and by reinforcing their interaction.

Clarifying the notion of impact

Using impact as an evaluation criterion in Horizon 2020 shows scientists the importance of considering the societal and economic effects of research and the value of intensifying collaboration with external partners. However, the concept of impact and how to assess it is currently vague and imprecise. Additionally, it is difficult to foresee the multiple impacts that can result from fundamental research in the long-term.

Remain flexible in assessing the impact of fundamental research projects and decrease the relative weight of impact expressed in numerical form in the evaluation procedure.

Action for EU institutions

Promoting open access to research publications and data

Open science and in particular, open access, are changing the way research is conducted, disseminated and assessed. In addition, outcomes from publicly funded research should be publicly available. Nowadays, research outcomes can be instantly shared making the long periods leading to traditional publications an obstacle for the development of research. Also, open access to data generated through research is needed to ensure efficient use of research funds.

Action for EU institutions

Further support open access to research publications in an affordable way for publicly funded organisations and increase the capacity for use and re-use of open research data.

2. Horizon 2020 funding & modalities

Securing ambitious funding based on grants

Sustainable and ambitious funding is necessary for Horizon 2020 to retain scientific talent and boost the global appeal of R&I landscapes in Europe.

Loan schemes and financial instruments, such as EFSI and InnovFin, are not suitable to fund university-based research as universities in most European countries are restricted in their capacity to borrow money.

Commit to an overall increase in the budget of the EU Framework Programme for R&I. Use grants instead of financial instruments and loan-based schemes to fund university-based research.

Actions for EU and national authorities

Enhancing programme efficiency & success rates

Eighty-six per cent or more of Horizon 2020 applications remain unfunded. Europe cannot afford the major waste and costs this generates at the institutional and national level. Success rates are at an all-time low and thus deteriorate the cost benefit ratio of the programme. The increase in top rated proposals is not being fulfilled by the available funding and this risks new scientific discoveries not being made.

Effective participation in Horizon 2020 requires institutions to develop targeted application strategies that promote strategic, sustainable and long-term institutional research programmes.

Actions for EU institutions

Increase the efficiency of the programme by bringing up the success rate and maintain a balance among calls and topics. Increase funding to fund at least all top-rated proposals.

Integrate the costs of unfunded proposals in the evaluation of success in national participation in Horizon 2020.

Improve complementarity of national and European funding to universities by setting up additional dedicated funds for unfunded Horizon 2020 high quality proposals.

Actions for national authorities

Action for universities

Prepare applications in strong areas of expertise and develop staff and other support.

Developing a strategic approach to efficiency and sustainability of research funding at all levels (institutional, national and European)

Strategic financial planning at national level must privilege a holistic approach taking full account of EU research funding. The return on investment must be considered accordingly. Declining national funding harms the universities' ability to compete successfully in Horizon 2020. Institutions from systems with lower or declining levels of funding tend to be less successful in their participation. This is likely to aggravate disparities in research, development and innovation capacity within the EU.

Develop a holistic approach to national and EU funding for research. Foster universities' participation and competitiveness in Horizon 2020 through sufficient core funding and additional support mechanisms.

Actions for national authorities

Improving cost coverage

The schemes that have been set up to increase cost coverage such as large research infrastructures and additional remuneration have not been working as intended for universities. Therefore, insufficient cost coverage of Horizon 2020 projects continues to discourage some universities from participating while it risks undermining the financial sustainability of others.

Action for EU institutions

Improve cost coverage for Horizon 2020 projects by retaining the current level of reimbursement of direct costs (100%) and increasing the funding rate for indirect costs to better cover infrastructure and other unfunded costs.

Enabling trust-based simplification

Despite the progress in simplification in some areas, Horizon 2020 is still associated with a high administrative burden at all stages of application, participation and project administration. Questions related to staff costs and accounting methodologies have yet to be solved. Universities have to adapt and set up special procedures to respond to the evolving legal and administrative requirements of the programme. The administrative burden reflects the lack of trust and transparency within the programme.

Ensure an adequate balance of flexibility, predictability and continuity of rules and provisions. Continue to simplify where it matters most.

Allow institutions to use nationally recognised costing methodologies, accept institutional management and accounting practices to reduce the administrative burden on beneficiaries. Guarantee sufficient transparency at all stages and build a trust-based funding system.

Actions for EU institutions

Fostering EU funding synergies

RIS3 is a promising area for synergies between ESIF and Horizon 2020 and, thus also for bolstering regional, national and European R&I ecosystems. However, their actual success will depend on more alignment, more coherence and more simplification of funding regulations, requirements and timelines that in turn will enable and encourage more cooperation among authorities and stakeholders from the public and private sector.

Action for EU institutions

Further support open access to research publications in an affordable way for publicly funded organisations and increase the capacity for use and re-use of open research data.

The European University Association (EUA) is the representative organisation of universities and national rectors' conferences in 47 European countries. EUA plays a crucial role in the Bologna Process and in influencing EU policies on higher education, research and innovation. Thanks to its interaction with a range of other European and international organisations EUA ensures that the independent voice of European universities is heard wherever decisions are being taken that will impact their activities.

The Association provides a unique expertise in higher education and research as well as a forum for exchange of ideas and good practice among universities. The results of EUA's work are made available to members and stakeholders through conferences, seminars, website and publications.



European University Association asbl · Avenue de l'Yser 24 · 1040 Brussels, Belgium
Tel: +32 2 230 55 44 · Fax: +32 2 230 57 51 · www.eua.be

