

## **EUA input to the public consultation on the past, present and future of the European Research & Innovation Framework programmes 2014-2027**

EUA is a recognised stakeholder in the development of the EU Framework Programmes for Research and Innovation. The Association dedicates its attention widely to these strategic programmes, gathering feedback from university members across the continent and providing input to policy makers. As part of this work, EUA wishes to outline the following recommendations aiming to improve Horizon Europe and contribute to the design of the next Framework Programme.

### **Excellent, collaborative and multidisciplinary research**

- Excellent, fundamental and frontier research must remain at the centre of Horizon Europe. Such research builds and sustains an indispensable reservoir of knowledge for societies to tackle current and future challenges. Notably, there is a need to rebalance the proportion of calls with lower, medium and higher TRLs for collaborative call topics within the Horizon Europe clusters.
- Multidisciplinary and collaborative research remain insufficiently explored. Funding programmes need to provide flexibility for universities to build bridges between different disciplines and strike a good balance between curiosity-driven and challenge-based research.
- Social sciences and humanities (SSH) remain underfunded. Societal analysis can bolster the innovative potential of scientific and technological advances and also safeguard their added value in a strengthened European Research Area.
- International openness should remain at the core of the Framework Programme. Horizon Europe should allow for close cooperation, including association where appropriate, with partners around the globe. Notably, EUA calls for the association of the UK and Switzerland to the programme.

### **Inclusion**

- Europe should embrace the concept of “distributed excellence” in order to narrow research and innovation gaps between countries and regions. Distributed excellence is achieved when all regions and member states are capable of participating in global research activity in a competitive way, at least in some selected fields.
- Horizon Europe should capitalise on unique research and innovation ecosystems to address national and regional disparities in terms of funding distribution, without compromising on excellence criteria.

### **Missions**

- Research should be a cornerstone in both the governance and the practice of missions, to ensure that these will involve a productive collaboration between research and innovation.
- Implementing the mission-based approach requires more multi-level, holistic and large-scale programmes and systems of governance. It therefore depends on being mindful of multidisciplinary and on including diverse stakeholders beyond the usual research and innovation performers.
- A mission implementation body should facilitate the multi-level governance cooperation and involvement of stakeholders, including universities and civil society. It should also ensure that a common vision on how to achieve the mission goals is shared among all involved actors, and coordinate the alignment between EU, national, regional and local initiatives for the

implementation of missions. Synergies between missions, as well as with relevant Horizon Europe clusters, should also be ensured.

### **Open Science**

- Mainstreaming Open Science practices in Horizon Europe has undeniably been a positive development. However, Horizon Europe should empower research and innovation actors with supportive measures to develop policies, foster capacity and build infrastructure in the transition to Open Science.
- Horizon Europe should support the renewed push for a responsible, transparent and sustainable research assessment system. An alignment with the recently launched Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA) will be needed, enabling a mainstreaming of its principles and commitments, and fostering their long-term sustainability.
- Scholarly publishing needs measures to support open access to publications, including actions to support the development of a just scholarly publishing ecosystem that is transparent, diverse, economically affordable and sustainable, technically interoperable and steered by the research community. EUA supports a mandate that aligns with the ambitions of Plan S.
- To realise the strategic objectives of the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC) and give Europe a global lead in research data management, proper support for FAIR data management is needed. Actions to foster the uptake of FAIR data practices and standards in various disciplines should be further supported and aligned with supportive measures to develop skills, policies and infrastructure at national and institutional levels.

### **Innovation**

- Innovation will only flourish if embedded in ecosystems allowing collaboration and exchange. This dynamism must be ensured by investments that go beyond marketable products, so that education and fundamental research can provide a steady pipeline of fresh talent and ideas.
- The diversity of ecosystems and the distributed excellence of research across countries and regions are an asset and not a hindrance to achieving the common goals of sustainability and digitalisation. Concurrently, while streamlining new and existing innovation instruments, the Framework Programme should be guided by a vision that also preserves regional specificities and does not overemphasise market valuation at the expense of societal welfare.
- Funding frameworks in national and European programmes should be strengthened in line with universities' pursuit of both bottom-up and challenge-driven projects, the vast potential for synergies between available schemes and the need to build capacity in innovation support services and knowledge and technology transfer offices (KTOs/TTOs).

### **Synergies with other funding programmes**

- Building synergies between education, research and innovation across disciplines is crucial to tackling the major challenges our societies face. As the European Union projects ambitious policy goals, such as the Green Deal or mastering the digital transformation, synergies and complementarities between different funding instruments are becoming increasingly important. Therefore, education, research and innovation need to be considered together in the implementation of the next generation of EU funding programmes to attain the related goals.
- Universities are contributing to regional development to a very great extent. In order to increase the impact of their activities in all the regions, there is a need for better compatibility and

interaction between regional, national and European programmes. The synergetic use of funds can only be achieved with higher levels of strategic and practical alignment of different policies and administrative simplification of funding instruments.

### **Rules for participation and simplification**

- Low success rates in the Framework Programmes need to be tackled from different angles, notably by increasing synergies among EU-funded programmes to finance excellent but unsuccessful proposals.
- Simplification of the project application, implementation and auditing phases play an important role in increasing success rates and participation in the programme. Therefore, there is a need for accepting beneficiaries' accounting practices under Horizon Europe to make a more efficient use of project resources, reduce error rates and improve cross-reliance between national and EU audits.
- One of the keys to simplification is also to improve the EU control environment based on the principles of efficiency, effectiveness and value for money. This means EU control must yield greater assurance for EU funders about beneficiaries' compliance with EU funding rules, while costing less money and effort to all parties.

A list of supporting EUA publications can be found in the attached annex.

EUA hopes that these recommendations will contribute to the improvement of Horizon Europe and lay the ground for the preparation of the successor programme.

## Annex: List of supporting EUA publications

1. [EUA vision for the next EU Framework Programme](#) (November 2016)
2. [Contribution to the Horizon 2020 mid-term review](#) (December 2016)
3. [Contribution to the Horizon 2020 mid-term review: core messages and recommendations](#) (December 2016)
4. [EUA position from Vision to Action](#) (November 2017)
5. [Where the EU should invest in the future - EUA recommendations for the post-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework and related funding programmes](#) (March 2018)
6. [Impactful Simplification of the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation](#) (May 2018)
7. [Analysis of the Horizon Europe proposal](#) (June 2018)
8. [Accepting university accounting practices under Horizon Europe: Strategic and practical recommendations](#) (September 2018)
9. [Accepting university accounting practices under Horizon Europe: A compendium of national and institutional cases](#) (September 2018)
10. [Achieving high-quality audit in European research - Propositions on simplification and alignment of funders' practices](#) (September 2019)
11. [Building synergies between education, research and innovation by aligning the EU funding programmes](#) (March 2020)
12. [An excellent, open and inclusive Horizon Europe](#) (September 2020)
13. [Universities without walls: A vision for 2030](#) (February 2021)
14. [Innovation ecosystems for a sustainable Europe: How to enhance the contribution of universities](#) (November 2021)
15. [Joint statement by CESAER, EARTO and EUA: Caution needed on interim analysis of lump sum pilot](#) (November 2021)
16. [EUA Open Science Agenda 2025](#) (February 2022)
17. [EUA-CDE Vision for the Future of Doctoral Education in Europe](#) (June 2022)
18. [Feedback by the European University Association \(EUA\) on Horizon Europe rules for participation and simplification](#) (July 2022)
19. [EUA Innovation Agenda 2026](#) (February 2023)
20. [Future-proof Horizon Europe through balanced cluster calls](#) (February 2023)