



ENRF Briefing Note on

EU Framework Programme 9 to help poorer Member States catch up in science

Looking at the upcoming EU's next research programme, Framework Programme 9 (FP9), the [European University Association](#) (EUA), Europe's largest university association, striving to bridge the gap in science and education between rich and poor countries, is urging the European Commission to provide more funding and continue to simplify the rules for participation in the FP9. As stated from the a [report](#) published by the Association, changes in the FP9 rules would help more researchers from poorer Member States access the programme and reduce the innovation gap between poorer and richer countries "without compromising excellence".

As already observed from different stakeholders, also several universities from across the continent have complained that the low success rate under Horizon 2020 – on average, about 14 per cent of applicants receive funding - has had a demotivating effect. In effect, the low success rate is having an inhibiting effect and discouraging a lot of universities in the application procedures. This problem is also related to all instruments and initiatives that should offer competitive salaries sufficient to attract and retain world-class researchers, regardless of the country. The universities are also demanding supplementary funds for the engagement of emerging excellent scientists from less research-intensive member states in successful collaborative research teams, the report says.

It is now clear that the innovation gap is one of the major challenges for FP9 and that steps need to be taken to reduce discrepancies among countries in the EU, even if the idea of a geographical allocation of funds is not feasible. Among the possible solutions, one is applying more EU development money to research and education, rather than construction. Moreover, teaming is a special funding line in Horizon 2020 to encourage rich and poor research groups to collaborate. Another approach, also begun in the past few years, is awarding a 'seal of excellence' to project proposals that were rated highly in Horizon 2020 but for which no money was available; a few Member States have so far agreed to fund some of those projects with their structural funds, instead.

In parallel, it is also important that universities ask more from their governments, especially in countries where public R&D budgets have been cut. Most EU Member States have failed to reach a target of spending 3 per cent of gross domestic product on research. Besides ring-fencing structural funds for R&D projects, another way of ensuring a level playing field for all countries would be to reduce the administrative costs of applying for an EU research grant.

The EUA said that FP9 should simplify the rules for the management of projects, as the full cost of participation in projects remains too high and often unaffordable for beneficiaries.

Universities also want the evaluation panels to have more members with multidisciplinary expertise, to better capture the societal impact of projects and ensure a better representation of the social sciences and humanities (SSH) in the programme.

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