



ENRF Briefing Note

Towards the next European Research Framework Programme

The next EU Research Programme (FP9) for 2021 – 2027 is currently being negotiated by the EU Institutions. The outcome of the negotiations is still uncertain, and it is not clear yet if an agreement on the Horizon Europe programme will be reached before the May 2019 European elections.

Within the framework of these negotiations and discussions, EU Institutions and stakeholders are preparing to the adoption of a programme that will define the role of research and innovation in the future of the EU.

In this context, the European Parliament has started its work on the [Commission's Proposal](#) last July, under the coordination of [ITRE Committee](#). The EU Parliament is calling for an **increase in the Horizon Europe research programme budget**. In particular, the [draft report](#) prepared by the European Parliament's Industry, Research and Energy Committee stresses the need of an increase in the Horizon Europe research programme budget from €94.1 to €120 billion and for more content to be put on the proposal, which has been criticised by Member States as not adequately developed. The German MEP Christian Ehler, one of the rapporteurs of the Report, has tabled 230 amendments to the 2021 – 2027 Horizon Europe programme, with the aim to "shape things in a more precise way".



Furthermore, the Report calls for broader representation for researchers on the board that will run the new European Innovation Council (EIC), saying it must include economists and academic experts on innovation policy, alongside start-up heads, industrial leaders and investors, to oversee the awarding of grants and purchase of equity in technology companies.

On the other hand, negotiations at Ministerial level are not following the same speed, with the discussion on the budget still at an impasse. At the Informal Meeting of the Council Competitiveness (Research) in Vienna, Ministers requested to be more [strongly included in planning the implementation of Horizon Europe](#). Ministers very clearly supported the continuation of the European Research Council for funding excellent basic research, as proposed by the European Commission. Measures for strengthening human resources in research, the so-called Marie Skłodowska Curie Actions, also received widespread support. Questions were raised as to a stronger budgetary weighting for both these activities, as well as with regard to research funding for industry-related technologies. Member States also want to ensure they can make changes to Horizon Europe in the future. That's important because, in a programme not due to end for another decade, the odds of policy priorities changing are high.



Moreover, the European Commission and national governments have been struggling to find a compromise on topics for new research missions - a new form of objective-focused research - under the €94.1 billion Horizon Europe programme. Two of the five missions suggested to receive funding from Horizon Europe include digitization and health. In this context, "health in the digital age" would get part of the 10 % of the budget of Horizon Europe going to missions in the first years, with around €1-2 billion going to each. More in general, the [budget proposal](#) for the 9th Framework Programme "Horizon Europe" tabled by the Commission last Spring has foreseen 7.7€ billion for the Health cluster.

Meanwhile, research stakeholders are advocating to **privilege excellence** over regional quotas. In particular, during a meeting of the group of seven Central and Eastern European universities ([CE7](#)) - Universities of Belgrade, Eötvös Loránd, Ljubljana, Prague (Charles University), Tartu, Warsaw and Zagreb – the rectors rejected the idea

of mandatory regional quotas, calling on MEPs to keep excellence as the most important criteria for awarding Horizon Europe research grants. This message responds to the amendment submitted by Romanian MEP Dan Nica, proposing that geographic evaluation criteria in the EU 2021 – 2027 research programme could fix EU’s research innovation divide. Namely, the amendment by MEP Dan Nica calls for the research programme to ensure “the effective reduction of the R&D and innovation divide by 50 percent within the Union and promote broad geographical coverage in collaborative projects.” The main concern of MEP Nica is that Horizon Europe should “ensure European geographical balance” of funded projects, evaluation panels and expert groups.

Another important point defended by universities concerns **an improved gender equality in the research programme**. In fact, a consortium of universities, science foundations and government organisations, called Gender Action, has published a series of [policy briefs on gender equality](#) in European research and innovation. The documents call for a greater prominence of gender equality issues in the negotiations for Horizon Europe.

Looking at other research opportunities beyond H2020 and Horizon Europe, the Parliamentary Report says that the existing established partnership will be considered for continuation beyond 2020. In this context, a recent meeting held in Brussels has focused on the achievements of the public-private partnership Innovative Medicines Initiative (IMI). Central topics of discussions have been cross-sectoral (and industrial) collaboration in health research. Among the many points raised, it has been recognised that Europe lags behind innovation breakthroughs. To support R&I collaboration in health domain, it therefore needed to develop innovation and collaboration centre in Europe.



Furthermore, participants emphasised the importance to overcome the silos model, as integration of all stakeholders is of paramount importance when developing patient-centred products. In this sense, the central role of end-users from an early stage

represent a key condition to health technology development. However, the attention for the MEPS towards the already established partnerships is not shared by the European Commission, as demonstrated by comments of EU officials that during the debate have emphasised that the IMI does not necessary represent the future. Conversely, EU representatives have stressed that Horizon Europe puts an emphasis on health research, in this context it needs to be proved that a public private partnership provides added value on scale, scope and impact.



Conclusion

Looking at the proposed budget for Health within the 9th Framework Programme "Horizon Europe", it is crucial to ensure that the amount of funding for health research will be sufficient to address the health burdens across different areas, therefore is calls on the European Commission, European Parliament and the Council of the EU to increase the overall budget of “Horizon Europe” as well as to allocate more funding to the “Health” cluster. However, if the EU budget is not approved before Parliament elections in May 2019, this could endanger negotiations in 2020. Therefore, EU leaders should prioritise the seamless continuation of EU programmes, ensuring that health and nursing research stay central in the next EU Research Programme.

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