EU Insight – Horizon 2020 (H2020)

What is Horizon 2020?

Horizon 2020 (H2020) is a key pillar of Innovation Union, a Europe 2020 flagship initiative aimed at enhancing Europe's global competitiveness with a proposed budget of roughly €80 bn (the European Commission's H2020 proposal can be found here: Horizon 2020 - Proposal Nov. 2011). The European Union is a global leader in many technologies, but it faces increasing competition from traditional powers and emerging economies alike.

For the first time, Horizon 2020 brings together all EU research and innovation funding under a single programme. It focuses more than ever on turning scientific breakthroughs into innovative products and services that provide business opportunities and change people's lives for the better. At the same time it drastically cuts red tape, with simplification of rules and procedures to attract more top researchers and a broader range of innovative businesses. The EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation is the world's largest funding programme for research projects.

Difference between FP7 and H2020

The main differences between EU's Seventh Framework Programme for Research (FP7, 2007-2013) and Horizon 2020 consist in:

o bringing together all existing Union research and innovation funding, including the Framework Programme for Research, the innovation related activities of the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme (CIP) and the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT);

o focusing on multidisciplinary societal challenges which the European citizens face;

o simplifying the participation of all companies, universities, and other institutes in all EU countries and beyond.

The three key objectives

Horizon 2020 will focus funds on three key objectives. It will support the EU's position as a world leader in science with a dedicated budget of €24.6 billion. Further, it will help secure industrial leadership in innovation with a budget of €17.9 billion. This includes a major investment of €13.7 billion in key technologies, as well as greater access to capital and support for SMEs. Finally, €31.7 billion will go towards addressing major concerns shared by all Europeans, across six key themes:

o Health, demographic change and well-being;

o Food security, sustainable agriculture, marine and maritime research and the bio-economy;

o Secure, clean and efficient energy;

- Smart, green and integrated transport;
- Climate action, resource efficiency and raw materials; and
- Inclusive, innovative and secure societies.

Funding for mobility, the ERC and international cooperation

Under the Commission proposal, €5.75 billion (+21%) will be allocated to the Marie Curie Actions, which has supported the training, mobility and skills development of more than 50 000 researchers since its launch in 1996.

Funding for the European Research Council (ERC) will increase by 77% to €13.2 billion. The ERC supports the most talented and creative scientists to carry out frontier research of the highest quality in Europe, in a programme that is internationally recognised and respected.

International cooperation will also be further promoted in Horizon 2020, in order to strengthen the EU's excellence and attractiveness in research, to tackle global challenges jointly and to support EU external policies (see Fact sheet: International Participation in Horizon 2020; a more detailed budget breakdown can be found here: Horizon 2020 - Budget Breakdown).

What's next?

During the coming months – by the end of 2013 at the latest – legislative acts will be adopted by the European Parliament (EP) and Council on Horizon 2020. The Specific Programme is to be accepted by the Council following an official hearing with the EP (consultation procedures).

On January 1, 2014 the framework programme will start and the first calls will be launched (for a more detailed time line and the legislative procedure see: European Commission - A time line for Horizon 2020).

Sources and further information:

European Union

European Commission - Horizon 2020 Homepage

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German Federal Ministry of Education and Research