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The ICT innovation strategy under Horizon 2020 focuses on ensuring that the rapid changes occurring in ICT technology develop into tangible benefits for European citizens.
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ICT innovation in Horizon 2020 focuses on societal challenges common to all Europeans, creating a more entrepreneurial ICT ecosystem in Europe, and helping innovative companies bring new products to the market faster.

What's new in Horizon 2020?

Horizon 2020 [1] is the EU's new funding programme for research and innovation (R&I). With a budget of almost €80 billion it is the EU's largest R&I programme to date. As well as a substantially increased budget, Horizon 2020 differs from earlier funding programmes:

- Combines R&I funding in a single programme;
- Couples research to innovation: the objective is to bring research and the market closer together by providing support from original research through to commercialisation of new products;
- Focuses on societal challenges: it prioritises areas of concern common to all EU citizens such as health, food security, energy efficiency, and climate change;
- Simplifies access: rules are made easier to simplify access for all companies, universities, institutes from the EU and beyond.

What Horizon 2020 means for ICT – focus on innovation

Support for ICT [2] plays a central role in Horizon 2020. In 2014 alone more than €1 billion will be available for ICT. As with Horizon 2020 in general, the funding for ICT focuses on innovation, ensuring that the research and development in ICT technologies develops into tangible benefits for European citizens.

In order to stimulate innovation in Europe various new projects will be launched under Horizon 2020. These projects address areas that have held innovators in Europe back, focusing on creating a more entrepreneurial ICT ecosystem, increasing the demand for innovation, and helping entrepreneurs to take risks and companies to grow.

Increasing the demand for innovation

Horizon 2020 strengthens the role of demand-side policies for promoting innovation. These can help steer research and development into concrete solutions and commercially successful products.

- Increases public demand: The aim is to support innovation procurement [3]. This involves public

contracts awarded to contractors who put forward innovative solutions for the needs of the public sector, through processes known as PCP and PPI. Support is also available for the development of European public procurer networks.
- Drives research through inducement prizes: Inducement prizes [4] are a new tool available under Horizon 2020. They offer rewards to groups or individuals who solve pre-defined challenges that benefit society.

Helping entrepreneurs to take risks and companies to grow

Horizon 2020 contains new and strengthened programmes to help finance innovation [5].

- Improving access to business angels and venture capital: Funds will be available to co-finance investments by business angels in innovative small and mid-sized businesses.
- Supporting disruptive innovation: The Open Disruptive Innovation Scheme [6], implemented through the SME instrument [7], provides support to a large group of early-stage innovative small businesses. It focuses on businesses that have the chance to produce new products or services that will disrupt existing markets or create new ones.

Creating a more entrepreneurial ICT ecosystem

Horizon 2020 aims to improve the conditions of the European ICT innovation ecosystem to ensure that researchers and entrepreneurs have the best conditions to transform ideas into commercially successful products.

- Connects entrepreneurs: ICT Entrepreneurship Labs [8] will bring innovators together in experimental spaces, helping increase interaction between entrepreneurs, students, researchers, and companies. A public campaign will promote ICT entrepreneurship, encouraging a culture of risk-taking in Europe.
- Creates a new generation of ICT entrepreneurs: New schemes will be launched to promote ICT entrepreneurship in schools and universities. ICT business idea contests will be launched to help foster an entrepreneurial spirit in a new generation of young people. A European network of Summer Academies will help university and last year high school students to develop ICT and entrepreneurial skills.

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