

“Stakeholder workshop shaping how Horizon Europe is implemented”

Brussels 30 January 2019

Plenary Session 2: “Reinforcing communication and information to beneficiaries”

In the past, the Commission has come under strong criticism for its communication to applicants & beneficiaries. Over successive Framework Programmes, the Commission has sought to better communicate with its stakeholders, and one of the widely acknowledged successes in this respect has been the Participant Portal.

However, based on the experience from Horizon 2020, lessons learned, and feedback from stakeholders, it is evident that some concerns remain. The results of the Horizon 2020 Stakeholder Consultation and the recommendations of the European Court of Auditors (“Special report on H2020 Simplification”) clearly indicate that the Commission should better communicate with applicants and beneficiaries. In particular, the European Court of Auditors stated that effective communication and information to beneficiaries *“are prerequisites for coherent application of the rules for participation and the consistent treatment of beneficiaries.”*

Our intention is therefore to reinforce and improve the communication and information feedback channels in Horizon Europe via joint, strategic communication actions that provide comprehensive communication on the full programme cycle.

More specifically, we propose to tackle:

- **communication related to programme functioning and implementation:** our aim will be to provide clear, comprehensive, coherent and timely information to applicants and to participants during the full project life cycle - from application through evaluation and management of the grant. In doing so, we will strive to eradicate divergent information and practices, ensure the consistent treatment of beneficiaries and decrease beneficiary confusion in the implementation of Horizon Europe
- **communication related to programme participation:** our aim is to reinforce communication on the programme - particularly with small organisations (SMEs) and newcomers - whose relative lack of expertise may impede their successful participation in the programme. By providing clearer, more targeted, information we hope to remove existing barriers to entry to the programme and further open up Horizon Europe.
- **communication related to programme results, dissemination & exploitation:** our aim will be to improve and better promote the existing channels (e.g. boosters, the

virtual market place, CORDIS, Dashboard) and create new ones, to help optimise awareness and use of these tools, and to foster the uptake of project results.

The Commission has several channels (outlined below) for communicating with, and receiving feedback from, beneficiaries on the functioning and implementation of the Framework Programme. A number of areas for improvement are identified in the table below.

In this session of the stakeholder workshop we would like to discuss these communication aspects with you, and hear your ideas on how to improve them. Furthermore, communication and information to beneficiaries is not an isolated issue. Aspects of communication will already have come up during the earlier break-out sessions and the presentation of the Dashboard.

In this session, you will also have the opportunity to raise these and any other issue related to the reinforcement of communication and information to beneficiaries in Horizon Europe. Your feedback is very important.

Reinforcing communication and information to beneficiaries	
Area concerned	Comment
<p>Information and guidance available on the Participant Portal (online manual, FAQs and reference documents)</p> <p><i>Intended to simplify grant management for beneficiaries</i></p>	<p>how can we further increase the quality of the guidance, the clarity, the legal certainty?</p> <p>how can the guidance be improved – particularly for SMEs and newcomers – who still experience difficulties dealing with the system’s complexity.</p> <p>is the information and guidance still too dispersed?</p> <p>is there a lack of explanatory documents?</p> <p>how can the FAQ function be improved?</p>
<p>Annotated Model Grant Agreement (AMGA)</p> <p><i>The AMGA presents all guidance on Horizon 2020 in a single document</i></p>	<p>although comprehensive, it is very lengthy and complex. Recently we have introduced an electronic version to overcome the difficulty of navigating between the different sub-sections of a pdf document. Is this useful?</p> <p>how can user interface with the AMGA be further improved?</p> <p>are the frequent updates helpful?</p> <p>how can we further increase the legal certainty?</p>
Information to unsuccessful applicants and	in what areas of the project life cycle do we need to

<p>to beneficiaries during the course of the project implementation?</p> <p><i>This issue may also have been raised during the earlier break-out sessions</i></p>	<p>improve information provided to stakeholders (applicants, evaluation, grant management, D&E)?</p> <p>how can the information and communication in these areas be usefully improved?</p>
<p>Research Enquiry Service (RES)</p> <p><i>The RES has been enhanced during H2020; but there are also other channels answering queries.</i></p>	<p>is there currently an issue with guaranteeing consistency of information and treatment of cases?</p> <p>would channelling <u>all</u> queries through the RES be more efficient and effective?</p> <p>are there issues with delays in receiving replies?</p> <p>In what way /what aspects of the support service could be usefully personalised?</p>
<p>National Contact Points (NCPs)</p> <p><i>The network of NCPs serves as an important conduit between the Commission and beneficiaries (especially SMEs and newcomers). It provides practical information and assistance to potential participants and enables the Commission to obtain feedback from beneficiaries.</i></p>	<p>how can the usefulness of the network for beneficiaries be improved?</p> <p>how can the information exchange processes between NCPs and the Commission be strengthened?</p> <p>is there a need to harmonise quality, adequacy and timeliness of information provided to NCPs across thematic programmes and implementing bodies?</p> <p>how can we increase the capacity building of NCPs?</p> <p>how can the levels of technical support and guidance offered by NCPs across the network be harmonised?</p> <p>how can we increase the quality of services provided by NCPs? Do they need to be better briefed?</p>
<p>Communication Campaign on H2020 rules, processes and IT-tools</p> <p><i>This is a yearly communication campaign that takes place in Member States and Associated Countries. These events also allow valuable feedback to be gathered from stakeholders.</i></p>	<p>we propose to make the events more 'tailor-made' with a country specific approach covering the specific needs of stakeholders.</p> <p>how can the campaign be further improved for Horizon Europe?</p> <p>what type of information would be useful to have?</p>
<p>Coordinators days</p> <p><i>These training events, organised in Brussels, are on specific aspects of the project life cycle. Although mainly targeted at coordinators of successful proposals, other interested parties such as NCPs and beneficiaries may also attend.</i></p>	<p>how can these training events be improved for Horizon Europe?</p> <p>should the target audience be expanded?</p> <p>are they held frequently enough/ at the right time?</p> <p>what subjects should be tackled?</p> <p>should these training events be more closely linked to the</p>

	<p>communication campaign events in the Member States?</p> <p>is there a need for other types of information days that would help reinforce programme participation and programme implementation?</p>
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