Orientations towards the Implementation Strategy of the research and innovation framework programme Horizon Europe web open consultation

(This consultation is linked to the ongoing "Horizon Europe Co-design 2021-2024" web consultation)

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1 Introduction

The new European Union Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, Horizon Europe, will run from 2021 to 2027. Following a political agreement on large parts of the draft legislation in spring 2019, the Commission, together with Member States and all concerned stakeholders, has launched a co-design process to prepare for the first work programmes and calls for proposals. Part of this preparation concerns the definition of the desired impacts and funding priorities, in pursuit of the programme's ambitious objectives, through the process of strategic planning[1]. A second part concerns the **Implementation Strategy**, which will set out how the programme will be managed in practice.

Clear and simple rules and processes must be established if Horizon Europe is to deliver the impacts expected, in a way that is as efficient and user-friendly as possible. At the same time, the way in which the priorities identified in the Strategic Plan are translated into calls and topics may impact the effectiveness of programme implementation.

This document is a starting point for debate and new ideas for the Implementation Strategy. It is based on an initial analysis of lessons learned, and of the new requirements inherent in Horizon Europe.

In the next section, you will find an assessment of the implementation processes that go together to form the draft strategy. Under each process there is a short explanation of the current state of play, including a description of current practices and experience gained, followed by new features of Horizon Europe, and lessons learned. Each section ends with a provisional list of the main orientations identified at this stage. The **on-line survey tool** allows you to respond to specific questions related to these orientations, and gives you an opportunity to react to any other issue that you consider relevant and important.

The inputs received during this co-design process will be taken into account in the drafting of a subsequent version. This will form the basis for further discussion, in particular at the European Research and Innovation Days on 24-26 September, and at national and regional stakeholder consultation events in Member States organized by the National Contact Points in the coming months.

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[1] https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/HorizonEurope_Codesign_2021-2024

2 Components of the draft implementation strategy

Rules and simplifications measures put in place for Horizon 2020 were widely acknowledged as a big step towards a more attractive and easier to use programme. The Implementation Strategy for Horizon Europe will therefore provide a strong measure of continuity, while incorporating improvements across the entire project life cycle, from proposal submission to efficient reporting and exploitation of results. It will be governed by the following principles:

- Innovative approaches in areas requiring improvement
- Simplification and harmonisation, improving access to the programme and inclusiveness
- Synergies and coherence with other programmes
- More efficient governance: co-design, better monitoring of implementation
- Efficient reporting and data management systems.

The strategy will ensure that the processes are designed in a joined-up and holistic way, underpinned by robust IT platforms and tools. Wherever possible, improvements in one part of the system will be designed to create benefits elsewhere, increasing efficiency of the system as a whole. Each implementation process is discussed below.

3 Main areas

3.1 Work Programme design

State of play

The detailed allocation of Horizon Europe funding to calls will be decided through a strategic planning process resulting in multiannual work programmes. While the content of the Horizon Europe work programmes falls beyond the scope of the Implementation Strategy, and is covered instead by the ongoing strategic programming process, the way in which the priorities identified in the Strategic Plan are translated into calls and topics may impact on the effectiveness of programme implementation.

In contrast to previous framework programmes, under Horizon 2020, work programmes were multiannual (work programmes were adopted for 2014-2015, 2016-2017 and 2018-2020). The objective was to give potential applicants a longer lead-time for preparing proposals. Nevertheless, each work programme was updated at least once – to confirm the budget for the second year, due to the annual nature of the European Commission's budgetary planning, and in many cases to also modify calls which had not yet opened.

Most calls for proposals contained topics which described the specific challenge to be addressed, the scope of the activities to be carried out, and the expected impacts to be achieved. However, experience demonstrated that the concept of impact was not always understood or evidenced clearly by applicants and proposals frequently did not explain in sufficient detail how the impact described in the work programme was to be achieved.

What is new in Horizon Europe

Even more than for previous framework programmes, achieving impact stands at the centre of the Horizon Europe programme, the general objective is to deliver scientific, technological, economic and societal impact. The Strategic Planning process aims in particular to implement Horizon Europe's programme-level objectives in an integrated manner and provide focus on impact for the Programme. The Strategic Plan will, in turn, guide the content of the work programmes and their calls for proposals. Proposals will be evaluated on the basis of the award criteria "excellence", "impact" and "quality and efficiency of the implementation".

The Commission proposal for Horizon Europe specifies that in the 'Global Challenges and European Industrial Competitiveness' and the 'Innovative Europe' Pillars, […] emphasis shall be put on non-prescriptive calls for proposals. Moreover, the collaborative parts of the Programme shall ensure a balance between lower and higher technology readiness levels (TRLs), thereby covering the whole value chain. The challenge is to translate these principles

into user-friendly work programmes for potential applicants, to enable the excellent proposals to achieve the targeted impact.

Main orientations

The orientations proposed aim to increase the impact of the European investment in research and innovation. The following are proposed:

–   to maintain the practice of publishing multiannual work programmes with a minimum of updates, unless required for addressing urgent, previously unforeseen needs;

–   to consider more frequent use of multiannual topics, with a choice of submission deadlines spread over more than one year.

For the 'Global Challenges and European Industrial Competitiveness' parts of the Horizon Europe work programmes, the following are proposed:

–   to consider indicating consistently the Technology readiness Level (TRL) expected to be reached by the end of the project, to ensure an appropriate balance between lower and higher TRLs;

–   to examine how to improve the description of the targeted impact of a topic and/or call;

–   to examine whether it would be appropriate in some topics to allow the applicant to decide the most appropriate type of action (e.g. Research and Innovation Action [RIA], Innovation Action [IA] or Coordination and Support Action [CSA]) for achieving the targeted impact;

–   to create less prescriptive calls, with topics that allow for a wide range of possible pathways to achieve the targeted impact.

Questions:

1.1. In your view, how important are these elements for the preparation of a good proposal? *[Answers range from 1 (not important at all) to 5 (very important) and 'I don't know', mandatory]*
   –   Work programmes which are multiannual;
   –   No changes to work programmes unless there are urgent, previously unforeseen needs;
   –   Multiannual topics which offer the possibility of submission for more than one deadline.

1.2. In your view, for the 'Global Challenges and European Industrial Competitiveness' part of the future Horizon Europe work programmes, how important are these elements for

the preparation of a good proposal? *[Answers range from 1 (not important at all) to 5 (very important) and 'I don't know'; optional]*
- Indication of the TRL (technology readiness level) expected by the end of the project;
- Topics which distinguish between the short-term outcomes expected and the longer-term impacts targeted;
- The applicant can decide which type of action is most appropriate for achieving the targeted impact (e.g. Research and Innovation Action [RIA], Innovation Action [IA] or Coordination and Support Action [CSA]);
- Topics which allow for a wide range of possible pathways to achieve the targeted impact.

1.3. What could be improved in the structure of the work programme and/or its calls to make it easier for applicants? *[Open question, max. 500 characters; optional]*

3.2 Submission and Evaluation

State of play

The submission and evaluation process is at the sharp end of programme implementation, determining which ideas actually get funded. The design of the process can therefore have profound implications on the way that the new programme delivers on its ambitious objectives. The interim evaluation of Horizon 2020, the report by the Lamy Group, and other stakeholder feedback, show that the current system is highly appreciated, and one of the reasons of the widely acknowledged successful implementation of Horizon 2020. However, they also indicate areas for improvement, for example in relation to the feedback to unsuccessful applicants.

The Commission proposal for Horizon Europe, and the current draft set of rules under the common inter-institutional understanding, both provide for a high level of continuity, based on the principles of transparency, equal treatment, equal opportunities, and the involvement of the best external experts from a wide range of disciplines and backgrounds.

With a view to maintaining and further developing a modern, world-class system, and identifying further simplifications where possible, we now need to identify improvements based on lesson-learned under the current programme, and how it needs to be adapted to accommodate the novel features of Horizon Europe.

What is new in Horizon Europe

The draft Horizon Europe rules recognise that special arrangements will be needed in those areas of the new programme requiring attention to <u>portfolios of projects</u>, notably in relation to 'missions' and the European Innovation Council's (EIC)[2]. Here, proposals will be ranked according to the evaluation score *and* their contribution to the achievement of specific policy objectives, including the constitution of a consistent portfolio of projects; and the evaluation committee may propose adjustments to the proposals in as far as needed for the consistency of the portfolio approach.

In other provisions, the draft rules also indicate the possible use of 'blind' evaluation (i.e. where the applicants' identity is not disclosed to evaluation experts) in the first stage of two stage procedures; and list possible criteria to be used when differentiating proposals with the same score, including geographic diversity.

More generally, the new programme brings improvements in the framing of impact at every level, which will influence the way calls and topics are designed, and the related submission and evaluation of proposals.

Main orientations proposed

<u>Missions</u>:

– Develop a system for mission calls (and other portfolio-based calls) that entails both an assessment of the intrinsic quality of individual proposals and, looking across all excellent proposals, how each may contribute to a consistent portfolio, based on considerations to be spelled out clearly in the work programme;
– Develop an appropriate grading scheme to give the flexibility for the above approach;
– Recognise that the approach adopted will largely depend on the design of a mission call, and may need to vary from mission to mission;
– Examine ways to encourage a consistent portfolio before a call, for example using an expression of interest mechanism;
– Ensure evaluation experts have the necessary breadth of knowledge and expertise, including from civil society and other stakeholders groups where appropriate.

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[2] Evaluation under the EIC is the subject of an ongoing pilot (EIC accelerator). It currently consists of a two-step process with a face-to-face interview at the second stage.

Evaluation criteria[3]:

- Simplify and reduce the number of 'aspects to be taken into account', where possible, ensuring that the same aspect is not assessed twice;
- Include an assessment of the quality of applicants under 'implementation', rather than as a separate binary assessment of operational capacity;
- Simplify or remove assessment of management structures.

Evaluation modalities:

- Two-stage and two-step procedures should continue to be used as alternatives to simple single-stage calls, where appropriate; The first stage of two-stage could be run 'blind' if a pilot indicates that such an approach is feasible;
- Examine ways for further simplifying two-stage, for example: reduce aspects evaluated at first stage; arithmetic methods for deriving first stage score; abolish 'substantial change' rule for second stage proposals (or at least define it with a very low bar); abolish first stage ESR for successful first stage applicants (while maintaining system of generalised feedback);
- Examine possible re-calibration of the scoring system (with the same resolution), to increase the range above threshold;
- Develop fair and transparent methods and criteria for prioritising proposals with tied scores; examine the possible utility of introducing a randomized element.

Interaction with applicants:

- Interviews should form part of the process where appropriate, while ensuring equal treatment for all eligible competing applicants;
- Run a pilot scheme allowing applicants to react to preliminary evaluation comments, before they are finalized.

Proposal template:

- Where feasible, capture information needed to assess the quality and identity of applicants in a structured form;
- Reduce the maximum length of the proposal (e.g. 50 pages).

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[3] The draft Horizon Europe Rules for Participation set the same three evaluation criteria as in Horizon 2020, namely "Excellence", "Impact" and "Quality and efficiency of the implementation".

Other improvements may be identified following further analysis of the Horizon 2020 evaluation processes.

3.3 Model Grant Agreement

State of play

The Model Grant Agreement (MGA) is the contractual document that the Commission or granting authority signs with the beneficiaries. It includes all financial and legal rights and obligations of the parties in relation to the grant.

Horizon Europe will make use of a new standard Commission-wide MGA which has been developed with a view for use by all EU funding programmes, facilitating synergies between them, and fully aligned with the recently revised Financial Regulation (July 2018).

The MGA for Horizon Europe will cater for the programme specific needs/objectives. In continuity with Horizon 2020, these relate in particular to IPR, ethics, gender, recruitment and working conditions for researchers, research infrastructure, security, etc.

Currently, there are some issues identified by beneficiaries and Commission services during the implementation of Horizon 2020, namely that there are too many different MGAs, leading to complexity, as well as some rigidity from a business processes perspective.

In that respect, there is a need to streamline the MGAs, taking account of the particular features of the different programmes under the next Multiannual Financial Framework, to ensure configurability for programme specific needs and to ensure sustainability, operability and serviceability from an IT deployment point of view ('eGrants').

What is new in Horizon Europe

Due to the stability of Horizon Europe Rules for Participation, the majority of the provisions in Horizon Europe will be the same as those in Horizon 2020. Yet, the new MGA also includes a number of simplifications. In terms of funding, Horizon Europe will take the beneficiaries' usual accounting practices more strongly into account, for example in view of the eligibility of costs for internally-invoiced goods and services or for prototype costs. Furthermore, the calculation of personnel costs will be simplified, notably to facilitate synergies.

The MGA will also reflect Horizon Europe novelties not related to funding such as, notably, the rules on dissemination and exploitation of results or the rules on impact evaluations of the actions against the objectives and indicators of Horizon Europe (e.g. those related to researcher's career and mobility).

Main orientations proposed

Only three types of MGAs will be used: a general model and two derived models based on unit costs and on lump sum respectively. For comparison, there are around 40 different MGAs in use in Horizon 2020.

In particular, the new MGA will be more user-friendly with the re-ordering of provisions, and the introduction of:

- A new data sheet with information about payments, reporting and participants;

- Clearer rules on types of participants and their roles (beneficiaries versus third parties), special participants (international organisations, third country beneficiaries, in-kind contributions etc.) payments and recoveries (now in the same article), guarantees and certificates;

- Common numbering, labelling and structure for MGAs.

In summary, this means that beneficiaries will have to deal with fewer MGAs, that the MGA will be easier to understand, and that the general provisions in the MGA will be the same across the EU funding programmes using the model.

As for the content, compared with the current programme:

- Provisions on personnel costs will be further simplified. The concept of productive hours and the various prescriptive methods to determine and report eligible personnel costs will be discontinued. Instead, a corporate and simpler formula is to be applied allowing for reducing errors and administrative burden for beneficiaries.

- Beneficiaries with project-based remuneration system will also benefit from further simplification, to tackle any undesired side effect of current Horizon 2020 rules.

- A wider reliance on beneficiaries' usual costs accounting practices for the calculation of unit costs for internally invoiced goods and services. In particular, it will be accepted that beneficiaries allocate actual indirect costs via key drivers in the unit cost calculation.

- A standard provision will be included addressing the specific case of assets under construction (like prototypes) and their related capitalised costs. This includes e.g. the full construction costs (typically the costs of the personnel involved in the construction of the prototype) and the full purchase costs (typically any component, pieces of equipment bought for the prototype).

As foreseen in the Rules for Participation, the Commission shall draw up the model grant agreement for Horizon Europe in close collaboration with the Member States. To this end, a series of meetings with the Model Grant Agreement Expert Group, regional workshops and sessions during the R&I Days will be organised in order to publish these models in time before the first calls under Horizon Europe are launched.

Questions:

3.1. Would the use of the same standard Model Grant Agreement (MGA) for all EU directly managed funding programmes facilitate synergies between them? *[Answers range from 1 (not good at all) to 5 (very good) and 'I don't know'; mandatory]*

3.2. Which provisions in the current Horizon 2020 Model Grant Agreement should be revise? *[Rank you top 5 provisions by order of preference; optional]*
- Personnel costs provisions;
- Internally invoiced goods and services provisions;
- Equipment costs provisions;
- Reporting provisions;

- Termination and suspension provisions;
- Amendment provisions;
- Payment calculation provisions;
- Other provisions (please specify).

3.3. Should the MGA contain a data sheet with key information on costs, forms of funding and payment schedules? [*Answers range from 1 (not useful at all) to 5 (very useful) and 'I don't know'; optional*]

3.4. How can we improve the clarity of the Annotated Model Grant Agreement for Horizon Europe? *[Open question; optional]*

3.4 Dissemination and Exploitation

State of play

The EU Institutions have recognised the importance of dissemination and exploitation (D&E) by stating in the Horizon 2020 Regulation that 'the Union should carry out activities to implement research, technological development and introduction to market of new technologies, promote international cooperation, disseminate and optimise results and stimulate training and mobility'. D&E is instrumental for achieving economic, societal and scientific impacts, both at Framework Programme (FP) and R&I project level.

However, the D&E activities at project level are less successful comparing to other goals of the projects. In general, D&E activities at project level do not yet get the necessary attention by the beneficiaries. This might be due to a lack of skills or support within their organisations on the particularities of dissemination and exploitation activities. Moreover, many D&E activities become pertinent much later after the end of the project.

To address the need for more and better D&E activities at Programme level and to help beneficiaries increase their D&E potential, the Commission collects the best D&E practices, has improved the guidance for beneficiaries and EC services and created the necessary data visualisation and management tools that allowed user friendly views of the FP data.

Flagship activities have been carried out to date, such as the Horizon Impact Award contest, the first one of its kind to recognise and celebrate outstanding Horizon 2020 or FP7 projects with demonstrated value for the society.

Additional deliverables in D&E include the Go-to-Market guidance, the D&E boosters and the guide for feedback to policy. The Go-to-Market guide, currently under preparation, is a flexible document to help project officers advise their projects about exploitation opportunities offered through various EU programmes and instruments. The Dissemination & Exploitation boosters are a 4-year framework contract that deliver customized services for

beneficiaries to enhance their D&E activities. The feedback to policy guide is built around a catalogue of practices and tools available and applied within the Commission services and implementing bodies for feeding policy recommendations into decision making. Next efforts will focus on extending the application of this guide to stakeholders beyond the Commission.

What is new in Horizon Europe

In addition to the existing D&E obligations for beneficiaries under Horizon 2020, Horizon Europe introduces novelties in D&E. The new Programme gives more emphasis to the exploitation of the R&I results and to the knowledge and impact these results create after the end of the R&I projects. In fact, one of the operational objectives of the Horizon Europe is to "encourage the exploitation of R&I results and actively disseminate & exploit projects results, in particular for leveraging private investments & policy development".

With this aim, a major novelty is the encouragement for third party exploitation of R&I results when the beneficiaries are unable to do so after the end of their projects. In this context, a flagship initiative is the upcoming Horizon Results Platform, that will support FP beneficiaries in showcasing the results of their projects in an appealing way, thus increasing the opportunities for networking and attracting potential users. The Horizon Results Platform offers the possibility to beneficiaries to make their results known and available therefore contributing to increase the exploitation potential of these results.

Another novelty is the focus on continuous reporting beyond the end of the project on D&E activities in order to allow the Commission to know if and how further support to beneficiaries is required. As the progress of Horizon Europe will be monitored in the short, medium and long term according to its objectives, it is important to translate this approach at the project level, by supporting even more the beneficiaries to take their project results to a next level, so they can create their own pathways to impact. This shall be transposed in the model grant agreement to allow enhanced visibility, identification and uptake of R&I results taking into account the simplification approach followed by the Commission.

Against this background, the Commission aims to review its approach in D&E under Horizon Europe, in consultation with all interested stakeholders, to maximise the value of R&I investment in the Union. The new work on D&E will foster the visibility, use and valorisation of R&I results, including mission outputs. Building on experience to date, the objectives in D&E will be:

- To identify R&I project results and make them available for potential use;
- Increase the uptake, use and valorisation of R&I results through targeted support to beneficiaries during and after the project lifetime;
- Provide the necessary framework for feeding consolidated outcome (including challenges and achievements), stemming from EU-funded R&I projects during and after their implementation, into policy and decision making;

– Contribute to maximizing the scientific, economic and societal impact of the R&I framework programme by supporting projects over their whole lifecycle (including after the end of the Grant) to progress on their own pathways to impact.

Main orientations proposed

– **Adapting the reporting templates**: In order to help beneficiaries comply better with the model grant agreement obligations on D&E, a change in the D&E reporting templates is proposed.

– **Incentives for continued reporting**: Incentivise the beneficiaries to continue the reporting on D&E activities after the end of their projects. The incentives can take many forms, for example additional financial support when exploitation potential is demonstrated by the beneficiaries. The orientation is to lead beneficiaries from the obligation towards the opportunities of exploitation. To this end, the Horizon Results Platform is expected to play a key role.

– **Enhanced guidance and support to applicants:** Guide applicants on the different steps they envisage towards delivering on their planned objectives, with different scenarios depending on whether milestones are achieved or not, up to their dissemination and exploitation strategy.

– **Enhanced D&E support to projects**: Beneficiaries communicate their needs for further support (e.g. financing, regulation/standards, internationalisation, human resources, infrastructures) to the Commission. Based on these needs, dedicated D&E services to beneficiaries will follow, aiming, among others, to improve their D&E strategy, develop their business plan or offer them go-to-market support. Furthermore, the Horizon Results Platform will offer an important avenue to make R&I results available and known to potentially interested third parties, hence increasing their exploitation potential. In addition, the Funding and Tenders Portal will be used to provide more visibility to individual researchers, organisations and projects to disseminate their results.

– **Fostering synergies:** Create more synergies with other EU programmes and initiatives on attained exploitable results. For example, under the ESIF, already piloted under Horizon 2020, it is feasible to match existing national, regional or inter-regional needs with mature R&I results thus providing another exploitation opportunity to FP beneficiaries in the Union (*See also section on 'Synergies' below*).

– **Strengthening feedback to policy**: Design and promote the necessary framework for regularly feeding to policy needs the consolidated and relevant information and results generated by the FP funded projects through the whole project lifecycle (including after the end of the grant). The focus will be on the timely knowledge diffusion

towards the concerned stakeholders (at EU, regional, national and international level), putting R&I evidence as an essential ingredient for better policy making. Attention will also be given to continuous analysis of R&I projects progresses (including hurdles to impact) to feed in the programming cycle, as well as other related other R&I policies (IPR, brain circulation, widening, etc.).

Questions:

4.1. What would be useful in your view to improve the dissemination and exploitation of projects results? *[Answers range from 1 (not relevant at all) to 5 (very relevant) and 'I don't know'; mandatory]*
 – Improved visibility and searchability of the results on the Funding & Tenders Portal at the project and individual level;
 – Easy-to-use search functionalities on the Funding & Tenders Portal for expertise of beneficiaries and/or follow-up activities;
 – Possibility for beneficiaries to complete their own public/private/project profiles in a dedicated platform with information they want to disseminate, including key needs for support
 – Possibility for beneficiaries to complete their own public/private/project profiles in a dedicated platform with information on past affiliation to projects.
 – Improved guidance on D&E expectations at call and proposal stages.

4.2. Dissemination and exploitation (D&E) is part of the evaluation criteria and constitutes a separate Work Package (WP) in the project's life cycle. How can beneficiaries' understanding around D&E be improved? *[Choose one or more answers; optional]*
 – Maintain D&E as subject to proposal evaluation;
 – Enhance training and raise awareness around D&E to applicants (using the Funding and Tenders Portal, existing networks such as EEN, NCPs, etc.);
 – Create a follow up support mechanism on D&E for beneficiaries;
 – Prefill parts of the proposal with the applicants project results from previous Framework Programmes (where applicable).

4.3. In you view, how could the European Commission incentivise beneficiaries to report on dissemination and exploitation after the end of the project? *[Answers range from 1 (not relevant at all) to 5 (very relevant) and 'I don't know'; optional]*
 – Keep the Horizon 2020 approach and provide tailor-made services through activities such as the Dissemination & Exploitation boosters;
 – Introduce and apply financial penalties for non-compliance;
 – Combine the obligation with financial incentives for further exploitation;
 – Making platforms available for communicating results to potential users.

4.4. Exploiting the full potential of R&I results for sustainable policy making is becoming more and more important. How could we strengthen the feedback to policy and decision

making, based on R&I results, at EU, local, regional, national and international levels? *[Open question; optional]*

3.5 Data and Reporting

State of play

Project reporting in Horizon 2020 was designed with the aim of minimising the burden for beneficiaries while still collecting the information and data necessary for project monitoring and ex-ante control, programme evaluation and impact assessment, feedback to policy making and communication with the public. Project reporting is carried out fully electronically via the Funding & Tenders Portal. The data collected via the project reporting are gathered in a common data warehouse (CORDA) and are enriched by linking to external data sources such as company registers, the European Patents Office (EPO) or the Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics (NUTS) codes and geocoordinates. The enriched data are made available to various stakeholders for reporting, statistical and analytical purposes, programme monitoring and impact assessment. Member States and Associated Countries can access raw data, predefined reports, search functionalities and dashboards.

The general public can access data and statistics (e.g. projects, proposals, Intellectual Property information country profiles….) through the Horizon Dashboard, an interactive and user-friendly tool available on the EU Funding and Tenders Portal. Detailed information on each funded project is published in CORDIS, the Commission Research and Development Information System.

What is new in Horizon Europe

The main orientations of the Horizon 2020 approach for project reporting will be kept. Some additional data and information will be collected, for implementing the **key impact pathway** approach provided in the legal basis of Horizon Europe, and the increased focus on dissemination and exploitation of results. This includes in particular information on all individual researchers involved in all projects. Some reporting obligations will extend beyond the end of the projects (in particular on publications, intellectual property, dissemination and exploitation).

Horizon Europe also introduces a new set of elements to **reinforce the monitoring of the Programme**[4]. In addition to the need to track the mainstreaming of social sciences and humanities, climate expenditures, gender balance in participation, level of international cooperation, Member States and European Parliament want to be continuously informed on the evolution of researchers' salaries, the monitoring of collaborative links, the level of TRLs in collaborative research, etc. They also requested data for monitoring programme implementation and results to be collected efficiently, effectively and in a timely manner without increasing the burden on beneficiaries.

The amount of data and information collected directly from beneficiaries should be kept to the necessary minimum. Cross-referencing, interfacing and data/text mining to/in existing data sources should be exploited wherever possible (with publication and patent databases, company registers, platforms providing researcher IDs etc.).

Main orientations proposed

Reporting and data collection in Horizon Europe will continue to serve different purposes: programme performance management, project and programme implementation monitoring, provision of data to support evidence based policy and decision-making, rapid responses to new information needs, contribution to the dissemination and exploitation objectives, fulfilment of the Commission's transparency obligations, provision of public access to high quality open and re-usable data, collaboration with stakeholders, etc...

- The necessary data will be collected through the various information systems supporting the programme and project lifecycle, including project reporting by beneficiaries.

- On the financial reporting side , the proven trust-based and risk-assessing approach of Horizon 2020 will be continued, requiring a limited standard set of data and information for all projects, with the possibility to ask for more details in individual cases, based on a risk assessment

- Specific focus will be put on enhancing the quality of the data collected through the various forms and reporting templates. This initiative aims at providing close to real time and quality data for reporting and analytical purposes, reducing data maintenance costs and enhancing data integration. To this extent, the Commission intends to enhance e-forms and reporting templates used by beneficiaries by introducing clearer

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[4] 2018/0224(COD) Article 45.

instructions, introducing validation rules and controls, reducing number of free text fields etc…

- − Data collected from beneficiaries will be enriched through linking with external data sources and the development of the internal capacities to collect, process, link, structure, and report on data, including the use of artificial intelligence methods. As an example, the Commission will capitalise on several pilots launched recently to complete the information on R&I results during and after the end of the projects without increasing the administrative burden on beneficiaries.

- − The development of the necessary data visualisation and management tools will be continued allowing for easy and rapid access to the information. As an example, the Horizon dashboard will be further developed and enriched with additional views.

Furthermore, the collection of the data will go beyond the Horizon Europe programme with the purpose of creating more valuable information for stakeholders and policy makers through data and statistics. Opportunities to take on board external data sources and Member States local R&I data will be looked at.

The R&I Framework programmes are the biggest programmes in the world in terms of funding but they represent only a fraction of the overall R&I public investment in EU.

The gradual creation of a central data hub encompassing implementation data on the European R&I investments (EU, national, regional and local) could serve as major data source for R&I policy making at all levels in the Europe,. It would aim at completing the EU landscape on R&I investments, at increasing the overall knowledge on priorities and needs and at supporting decision-making at Member States, regional and EU levels.

Questions:

5.1. Which parts of the Horizon 2020 reporting templates and guidance require improvements *[Rank answers by order of preference; mandatory]*
- − Financial reporting part;
- − Template for the technical report;
- − Data collection on publications, IPR, dissemination and communication activities, societal issues.

5.2. Please give us one concrete suggestion for improving the project reporting *[Open question, optional]*

5.3. Have you already use the Horizon 2020 Dashboard? *[Yes/No; mandatory]*

If answer is YES: Which parts of the Horizon 2020 Dashboard do you find most useful *[Rank*

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answers by order of preference; optional]?
- – Horizon 2020 proposals dashboard;
- – Horizon2020/FP7 projects dashboard;
- – Horizon 2020/FP7 project results dashboard;
- – Horizon 2020 country profiles;
- – European Innovation Council dashboard;
- – Seal of excellence dashboard;
- – I don't know.

5.4. On which other aspect would you like to have a specific dashboard? *[Open question, optional]*

5.5. The European Commission proposes to create a central EU R&I data hub on data from the EU R&I investments made at EU, national, regional and local levels. Do you consider this could support the definition of R&I policies in Europe at local, regional, national and European levels? *[Answers range from 1 (not at all) to 5 (to a great extent) and 'I don't know'; optional]*

5.6. What additional orientations would you suggest for maximizing the value and use of data from EU R&I programmes? *[Open question; optional]*

3.6   Control Strategy

a) Ex-ante control strategy

State of play

Ex-ante control is designed to prevent errors and irregularities before the de facto execution of operations and to mitigate risks of non-achievement of objectives. In the EU's direct grant management, these controls are undertaken before the authorisation of transactions i.e. before the decision (to award a grant, signature of grant agreement, payment of due grant amounts). Each operation is subject to an ex ante control relating to both the operational and financial aspects.

Under Horizon 2020, the Commission made significant efforts to simplify and harmonize ex ante control practices. Consequently, there is strong emphasize on trust (of beneficiaries and their own control practices) that is combined with a risk-assessment based, lean and targeted control. As a result, the ex-ante controls are more efficient and the administrative burden significantly reduced both for beneficiaries and EU services.

The extent of ex-ante control, i.e. the frequency and intensity, will be determined by taking into account the results of controls and experience with Horizon 2020 as well as the risk-and impact assessment of changes brought forward to Horizon Europe (e.g. rules of participation, eligibility of costs etc.).

Main orientations proposed

Continuity and sustainability: ex-ante control under Horizon Europe will build on the foundations and achievements of the common ex-ante control strategy designed for the implementation of Horizon 2020. Accordingly, grant management will continue to rely on trust, limiting the administrative burden and ensure consistent and equal treatment of beneficiaries. Control operations are composed by the combination of lean systematic baseline checks and scalable targeted and specific control actions that take into account the outcome of systematic risk assessment. In this spirit, particular attention will be dedicated to the early detection of emerging risks of irregularity and preventive actions including awareness raising and dissemination of best practices.

Questions:

6.1. Are you largely satisfied with the current Horizon 2020 approach for financial reporting i.e. the level of details required in the financial statements (FS) and the prompted details on the so called 'use of resources' section? *[Yes/No; optional]*

If answer is NO: "Please briefly explain what changes you would like to see. *[Open question; optional]*

6.2. Under Horizon 2020, the Certificate of Financial Statement (CFS) is an important element of the trust-based ex-ante control approach. Given that it is intended to continue this approach under Horizon Europe, would you have ideas for improvements of the CFS system or suggestion for changes (e.g. in the content, level of details of the CFS)? *[Open question; optional]*

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b) Ex-post control

State of play

The main purpose to ex-post controls is to ensure compliance of the declared costs with the eligibility criteria stipulated in the grant agreement signed between the Commission and beneficiaries. The auditors perform their work taking into account the provisions of the audited grant agreement under the Horizon 2020 Framework Programme for Research and Innovation and in accordance with International Standards on Auditing. Those standards

require that the auditors comply with ethical requirements, plan and perform relevant procedures in line with the Horizon 2020 Indicative Audit Programme in order to obtain reasonable assurance that the financial statements are free of material misstatement.

In case the audit identifies systemic errors, the Commission may extend those findings to non-audited grant agreements or non-audited periods. Besides these corrections, other measures may be taken, including financial and administrative penalties.

The framework for ex-post audits in Horizon 2020 includes a single set of rules and annotations as well as an Indicative Audit Programme in order to ensure equality of treatment, consistency of audit reports and legal certainty for beneficiaries. In addition, the auditability period has been reduced to two years after the closure of the actions.

The interim evaluation of Horizon 2020 shows that the Commission has centralised the design and implementation of the audit strategy. This has brought considerable simplifications to Horizon 2020, both externally for the stakeholders and internally for the Commission services involved in Horizon 2020.

Stakeholder position papers show that simplification is welcomed but further steps are needed also regarding cost declarations and recognition of nationally accepted and audited accounting practices.

The Commission proposal for Horizon Europe, and the current draft set of rules under the common inter-institutional understanding, both provide for a high level of continuity, based on the principles of common implementation, equal treatment, consistency and better alignment with international audit standards.

The Commission continuously analyses the results of ex-post audits and draws lessons learned aiming in improving even further the auditing process and simplifying the underlying rules. These lessons learned will materialise in the way the Commission will perform audits under the new Framework Programme.

What is new in Horizon Europe

Under Horizon Europe emphasis will be put on the cross-reliance on audits. The objective is to have equivalent conditions between EU programmes, irrespectively of the management mode they operate. Moreover, a new approach on Systems and Processes Audits (SPAs) will be explored. Through a review of the main internal control systems and processes of beneficiaries, the objective is to flag risks and to perform audit procedures and walkthrough test in line with the International Standards on Auditing. Further consequences of a valid SPA for beneficiaries are currently under analysis in order to further ensure reduction of burden on beneficiaries and increase of leverage of union funding as well as cross reliance through a reinforcement of internationally accepted audit standards.

The design of an ad hoc audit programme following SPAs should bring an increase of the leverage of Union funding and cross reliance and a reduction of the administrative burden in

Control and Audit matters. Several SPAs crash tests will be performed on Horizon 2020 legal basis in order to test SPAs feasibility and ensure optimum design of the SPA audit programme to meet its objectives.

Main orientations proposed

Ex-post control under Horizon Europe will build on the foundations and achievements of the common ex-post control strategy designed for the implementation of Horizon 2020. Unique audit programme co-designed with stakeholders and better aligned with International Auditing Standards should ensure consistent and professional audit approach. Commission will perform the Horizon Europe audits in order to ensure consistency of audit findings and equal treatment of beneficiaries. Risk based controls will be further enhanced and will be combined with synergies between ex-ante control and the ex-post control strategy as well as cross reliance on audits.

More system based approach audits and cross reliance on audits will further improve the ex-post matters in Horizon Europe by better relying on usual cost accounting practices of beneficiaries. This will contribute to decreasing the administrative burden on beneficiaries while providing similar level of reasonable assurance to the Commission services that costs have been properly incurred and are eligible costs, as defined under the Horizon Europe Grant Agreement.

Questions:

6.3. What type of benefits would you expect from a System and Process Audit (SPA)? *[Rank by order of preference; optional]*
- Fewer ex-post audits;
- Less intensive ex-post audits;
- Fewer ex-ante Certificates on Financial Statements;
- Less intensive ex-ante Certificates on Financial Statements;
- Reliability for other EU audits.

6.4. The System and Process Audits (SPA) should be valid… *[Choose one or more answer; optional]*
- Until a change in the methodologies of the auditee;
- For maximum 3 years after completion for the Horizon Europe framework programme;
- For the whole Horizon Europe framework programme.

6.5. What are the limitations to a SPA? *[Choose one answer; optional]*
- Lack of homogeneity of systems and processes inside the same organisation (e.g. when different locations have different internal processes;
- Nature of processes: some (e.g. subcontracting) are more system approach than others;
- Other (please specify).

6.6. Would it be useful to seek synergies with national research and innovation funding bodies in the audit field? How could this be implemented in practice in your view and based on your experience if applicable? [*Open question; optional*]

3.7 Extended use of simplified forms of costs

State of play

The Commission has frequently been criticised for concentrating too much on spending and not enough on performance and results of projects. For decades, the focus was essentially on verifying whether grants have been spent properly. Insufficient attention was devoted to what matters the most: the actual outcomes of the funded actions. Moreover, funding based on reimbursement of incurred costs, which is the model applied in R&I programmes, not only requires extensive financial reporting but also is prone to error.

The Financial Regulation provides the possibility to use lump sum, unit cost and flat rate funding when appropriate and details the conditions to use this form of EU contribution.

In its Special report on Horizon 2020 Simplification, the European Court of Auditors (ECA) highlights the potential of simplified cost options, in particular lump sums, as a major step to decrease administrative burden for beneficiaries, and calls to intensify the testing of lump sums.

In the R&I field, the first significant step towards the use of simplified forms of costs took place under Horizon 2020. In particular, through the wider use of unit costs and flat rates and notably through the first Lump Sum pilot launched in 2018 in specific calls of Horizon 2020 to test simplified forms of funding for multi-beneficiary actions[5].

Two options for setting out the lump sum were put forward: either fixed ex-ante by the Commission in the call for proposals, or proposed by the applicants for each grant agreement based on a detailed estimation of costs. Two main principles are driving the use of lump sum

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[5] List of lump sum pilot calls launched in 2018: **SC1-BHC-37-2020**: New anti-infective agents for prevention or treatment of neglected infectious diseases; **Shift 2 Rail Pilot**; **DT-NMBP-20-2018:** Digital "plug and produce" on-line equipment platforms for manufacturing; **ERC-2019-PoC:** Proof of concept grant for Principal Investigators of ERC frontiers research grants

funding. First, lump sum evaluation and grant agreement follow a standard approach as much as possible, using the same evaluation criteria, the same pre-financing and payment scheme and the same reporting periods. However, when the applicants provide a detailed estimation of costs, the experts assess cost details during evaluation and can make recommendations. Secondly, one lump sum share is fixed in the grant agreement for each work package and each beneficiary. This amount is paid at the end of the reporting period, when the activities in the work package have been properly completed. This main principle has implications for proposals structuring, evaluation, grant preparation, budget transfers and ex-post controls.

In its report, the ECA recommends analysing and reporting on the outcome of calls already launched under Horizon 2020 and launching new pilot initiatives on larger scale to identify most suitable types of project, assess possible drawbacks and design appropriate remedies. Therefore, the Lump Sum pilot scheme is currently being extended with the launch of 10 new pilots in the 2020 work programme, addressing different types of actions (CSA, IA and RIA), mono and multi-beneficiaries actions and future projects of different sizes[6].

What is new in Horizon Europe

The explanatory memorandum of the Commission Proposal COM(2018) 435 for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on establishing Horizon Europe, laying done its rules for participation and dissemination states that "simplification is key to reaching the objectives of Horizon Europe. To attract the best researchers and the most innovative entrepreneurs, the administrative burden of participating must be kept to a minimum". One of the main simplification features of Horizon Europe will be the "increased use of simplified cost options, in particular of lump-sum project funding, in appropriate areas and taking account of the lessons from the pilot under Horizon 2020". The wider use of flat rates and unit costs will also be taken into consideration.

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[6] List of lump sum pilot calls in the 2020 work programme: **H2020-INNOSUP-02-2019**: SME Innovation Associate Programme; **FETOPEN-03-2018-2019-2020:** FET-Open Innovation Launchpad; **SC1-BHC-37-2020**: Towards the new generation of clinical trials – trials methodology research; **SC2 - BG-07-2020**: The Future of Seas and Oceans Flagship Initiative", sub-scope C "Technologies for Observations; **LC-SC3-RES-18-2020**: Advanced drilling and well completion techniques for cost reduction in geothermal energy; **MG-4-9-2020**: The European mobility culture of tomorrow: Reinventing the wheel?; **LC-CLA-18-2020**: Developing the next generation of Earth System Models; **MIGRATION-4-2020**: Inclusive and innovative practices for the integration of the post 2015 migrant in local communities; **DT-NMBP-23-2020**: Next generation organ-on-chip; **NSUP-1-2020**: Fostering transnational cooperation between national support structures (e.g. National Contact Points): ensuring a transition between Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe

Main orientations proposed

As the first lump sum pilot grants were signed in spring 2019, experience is still very limited and covers the first steps of the project lifecycle, submission and evaluation of proposals and, grant agreement preparation. However, the first feedback on the lump sum pilot scheme is globally positive. The initiative has also created positive interest from Members States and National Contact Points. Overall, feedback from involved stakeholders shows expectations on easier reporting. However, there is still room for improvement to guarantee that lump sum funding will enable the participation of a broader number of participants to Horizon Europe.

Based on lessons learned and, on internal and external consultations with actors involved in the pilots (beneficiaries, EC project and financial officers, NCPs), the following orientations are under consideration:

- Reinforcing appropriate guidance enabling to understand the specificities of lump sum funding. Specific guidance should target beneficiaries to help them planning and structuring their project, especially regarding the design of work packages. Guidance on the specificities of lump sum projects should also target evaluators, as experts must assess the work packages and perform an ex-ante cost validation. Furthermore, strengthening the ongoing cooperation with National Contact Points will be essential, as the first feedback from applicants underlines the need of further NCP advice while drawing up a lump sum project proposal.

- Reinforcing the harmonized implementation of the lump sum pilots. In particular reviewing the templates and further improving the specific support tools for beneficiaries to present the detailed cost estimate of their project.

- Further assessing the impact of lump sum specificities on consortium building.

- Learning through project monitoring about the consequences of the split of lump sum share per work package and per beneficiary, especially regarding payments.

Questions:

7.1. Have you been involved as applicant and/or beneficiary in a lump sum pilot project? *[Yes/No; mandatory]*

If answer is YES:
  a) To what extent was proposal writing different in comparison to other proposals you may have written under Horizon 2020? *[Answers range from 1 (not at all) to 5 (to a great extent) and 'I don't know'; optional]*
  b) To what extent was consortium building different in comparison to other proposals you may have submitted under Horizon 2020? *[Answers range from 1 (not at all) to 5 (to a great extent) and 'I don't know'; optional]*

7.2. Do you think lump sum project funding will make R&I Framework Programme more accessible to… *[Answers range from 1 (not at all) to 5 (to a great extent) and 'I don't know'; mandatroy]*

- New participants;
- Experienced participants;
- Smaller actors.

7.3. To what extent the abolition of cost reporting and auditing in projects funded by lump sums will make project management and administration easier? *[Answers range from 1 (not at all) to 5 (to a great extent) and 'I don't know'; optional]*

7.4. What is your perception of the system of payments for lump sum project funding? *[Open question; optional]*

7.5. What is the impact of lump sum project funding on the internal management of the consortium (compared to cost-based funding)? *[Answers range from 1 (will become way more complex) to 5 (will become way easier) and 'I don't know'; optional]*

3.8 Outreach

State of play

Feedback received from stakeholders' consultations, the Horizon 2020 interim evaluation itself, as well as recommendations by the European Court of Auditors underline that while the current programme is delivering on its objectives, more could be done to better communicate and engage with stakeholders. As stated on the report form the European Court of Auditors, "Effective communication is a prerequisite for coherent application of the rules for participation and the consistent treatment of beneficiaries".

Several channels are used to communicate with stakeholders, among them outreach events, coordinators days, trainings, research enquiry service and the network of the National Contact Points (NCPs).

The aim is to reach out and engage with stakeholders, inviting them to voice their needs and provide input, to better co-create the processes and procedures of the new programme.

Horizon 2020 Outreach Events are organised in Member States and Associated Countries in order to properly inform, guide and help beneficiaries to implement their Horizon 2020 grants. The aim is to explain the rules and procedures of the Programme, and to discuss on good practices with the stakeholders concerned by each topic. Through these events, user

feedback is collected with the view to improve IT systems and to inform the Commission policy work in the area of Research and Innovation.

Events targeting projects' coordinators are also organised on a regular basis. Coordinators days focusing on grant agreement provide information to coordinators on the preparation and signature of their grant agreement. Coordinators days on amendments and reporting focus on legal aspects, business processes and IT tools used to prepare grant amendments and reports, with particular attention to the financial aspects and eligibility of costs. These events are web streamed, thus enabling a wider participation of projects' coordinators.

The system of National Contact Points is established, operated and financed under the responsibility of the Member States and countries associated to Horizon 2020 (there are over 2.650 nominations: 1.300 for Member States, 450 for Associated Countries and 900 for Third Countries approx.). By spreading awareness, giving specialist advice, and providing on-the-ground guidance, NCPs ensure that Horizon 2020 is known and readily accessible to all potential applicants, irrespective of sector or discipline.

The Research Enquiry Service (RES) is an online helpdesk service provided by the Commission to answer questions from applicants and beneficiaries about all aspects of EU research funding and about the validation process of legal entities. Prospective and actual beneficiaries can thus seek support throughout the life-cycle of their project.

What is new in Horizon Europe

Effective R&I communication and outreach campaigns targeting the general public are foreseen in Horizon Europe.

The new initiatives of Horizon Europe, notably in the area of 'missions' and the EIC, together with well-established components, including exciting research and innovation in collaborative challenge-driven projects, and in frontier research under the ERC, all create a great momentum for further outreach to Horizon Europe stakeholders. There is an opportunity to develop further the communication channels and practices, to set a new structure that facilitates stakeholder's engagement and to promote dialogue, which will result in a participatory model of co-creation of all aspects of the new Programme.

A smooth transition from Horizon 2020 to Horizon Europe NCPs is envisaged to ensure high quality services for project proposers (including widening countries).

Main orientations proposed

The orientations proposed focus on the novel features of Horizon Europe and areas for improvements, based on lessons learned under the current programme:

- Assess the existing dissemination channels and develop outreach plans that will efficiently serve the outreach objectives.

– Use new ways of stakeholder's engagement and feedback collection, supported by qualitative analysis and other metrics and KPIs to measure the input received.

– Consider innovative ways to inform citizens and stakeholders about the objectives, progress and outcomes of missions.

– Strengthen information and communication flows between Commission services and NCPs based on current best practices.

– Update the NCPs network, functions and standards, in agreement with the Member States, in accordance with the needs and objectives of the new Programme.

– Improving the Research Enquiry Service (response time, quality of replies).

Questions:

8.1. With which support services have you interacted, if any, during the course of Horizon 2020? *[Choose one or more answers; mandatory]*
  – Research Enquiry Service;
  – National Contact Point;
  – EU programme support office, or similar, in your organisation;
  – Professional consultant;
  – Outreach events in Member States;
  – Coordinator days;
  – Training to beneficiaries;
  – Other (please specify);
  – None.

8.2. For each service you indicated, what would you propose to improve? *[Open question; optional]*

3.9 Digital transformation

State of play

A radical simplification of grant management procedures has been introduced in Horizon 2020 with, at the heart, a Web interface – the Funding and Tenders Portal – providing a user-friendly one-stop shop for thousands of researchers, SMEs and other beneficiaries of EU research and innovation funding. Up to date, the Portal has more than half a million registered users.

The key goals of the system are simplification, transparency and collaboration. Simplification, as many complex systems managed previously by different DGs and services have been replaced by a single streamlined and uniform system for the whole framework programme. Transparency, as all necessary information on funding programmes, calls for proposals and procedures is permanently available on-line, through the Funding and Tenders Portal, to all citizens. Collaboration, as the re-engineering process has been co-designed with beneficiaries, Member States, the European Parliament, the European Court of Auditors and other stakeholders.

As such, Horizon 2020 has set a new benchmark in good public administration. E-signatures and automated document handling speed up all processes, reduce paper and transport and improve transparency. In the recent years numerous other granting programmes of the European Commission, all of which can now be found in the Funding and Tenders Portal, have adopted the approach.

What is new in Horizon Europe?

The aim in Horizon Europe is to keep simplifying rules and improving the digital management system.

Horizon Europe comes with a number of novelties that will need a dedicated digital support. It concerns in particular the changes proposed for the submission and evaluation of proposals, a new model grant agreement, project reporting and data collection or the extended use of simplified costs, explained in previous sections of this document.

Looking wider at the whole multiannual post-2020 financial period, the target is to have most of the funds directly managed by the EU available in the Funding and Tenders Portal, which would offer a single place with access to full range of calls published by the Commission at any given moment in time. Furthermore, additional modules offering new capabilities of reporting and exploring data, access to results of the programmes as well as improved online communication capabilities, better user experience and enhanced performance will be delivered.

Main orientations proposed

Regarding electronic management, the priorities will be oriented towards providing the necessary implementation of Horizon Europe rules and their full integration in the digital platforms to have full electronic support for the framework programme. Further, due to the corporate nature and scale up of the scope, the necessary measures will be put in place to ensure that the performance and responsiveness of the solution will be adequate. The orientations proposed focus on the novel features of Horizon Europe and areas for improvements, based on lessons learned under the current programme:

- Bring together all directly managed EU programmes in the Funding and Tenders Portal, which would offer a single place with access to full range of calls published by the Commission at any given moment in time.

- Deliver additional digital modules offering new capabilities of reporting and exploring data, access to results of the programmes as well as improved online communication capabilities, better user experience and enhanced performance.

- Integrating and offering as part of the IT solution additional features that are now possible with modern technologies (data mining, AI…)

Questions:

9.1. What do you think about having all the EU funding programmes available in a single portal? *[Choose one or more answers; mandatory]*
- It is simpler to find funding opportunities across all EU funding programmes, in just one place;
- It provides all potential beneficiaries with a single door to submit their proposals;
- It allows for a corporate electronic management of all EU funding programmes;
- It is more complex, if I am interested only in one programme;
- Other (please specify);
- I don't know.

9.2. Which additional features of the Funding and Tenders Portal would you find useful? *[Choose one or more answers, mandatory]*
- Partner search at the level of individuals (in addition to the existing organisation based partner search) for finding potential partners for your project ideas;
- Person profile page for individuals involved in projects, linking to other data sources (publication databases, social platforms for researchers…);
- Extended interactive programme reporting platform (Horizon 2020 Dashboard);
- Other (please specify);
- I don't know.

9.3. How can we improve the functions of the Funding and Tenders Portal? *[Choose one or more answers; optional]*
- Optimize the search functions;
- Make the dashboards more user-friendly;
- Revise the system of notifications;
- Improve compatibility with different browsers;
- Increase system response speed;
- Other (please specify).

3.10 European Partnerships

Horizon Europe supports a more rationalised, strategic and impact-oriented approach to partnerships by introducing a set of conditions that guide the selection, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and phasing-out of partnerships. It also puts forward a number of simplifications to ensure a better participant experience, notably central management of financial contributions, common set of rules, use of Commission IT tools and better access to information and results from partnerships. A more centralised and harmonised approach will allow access to high quality data and evidence for policy makers and help partnerships to better deliver on their objectives.

What is new in Horizon Europe

European Partnerships shall be established for addressing European or global challenges only in cases where they will more effectively achieve objectives of Horizon Europe than the Union alone and when compared to other forms of support of the Framework programme. They will be designed and implemented on the basis of key principles of Union added value, transparency, openness, impact within and for Europe, strong leverage effect on sufficient scale, long-term commitments of all the involved parties, flexibility in implementation, coherence, coordination and complementarity with Union, local, regional, national and, where relevant, international initiatives or other partnerships and missions.

They will be selected, implemented, monitored, evaluated and phased-out on the basis of a set of criteria. Notably, the implementation phase needs to ensure a systemic approach ensuring the achievement of expected impacts, measures to ensure openness and transparency, coordination and/or joint activities with other relevant R&I initiatives ensuring effective synergies, receipt of commitments for financial and/or in kind contributions. Importantly, all partnerships need to have clear exit strategy from the outset.

As part of the rationalisation, Horizon Europe introduces a simpler architecture under the umbrella term "European Partnerships". European Partnerships are grouped into three categories/types (co-programmed, co-funded and institutionalised partnerships); the choice of type of partnership will depend on the policy needs in each domain, while institutionalised partnerships (i.e. based on Article 185 and 187 TFEU or EIT KICs) will only be established where other forms of European Partnerships cannot achieve the same objectives.

An open public consultation will be launched for all proposals for institutionalised partnerships, collecting input from a broad range of stakeholders, on both the horizontal aspects and the individual candidates for institutionalised partnerships under Horizon Europe, based on Article 185 or Article 187 TFEU. It can be accessed via the Commission's Your

Voice in Europe consultations page. The results of this consultation will provide input to the impact assessment work for the proposals for institutionalised partnerships, which will in turn inform the final portfolio of partnerships to be proposed by the Commission. This work will also inform the implementation-related aspects of European Partnerships, including the implementation of the new conditions and criteria set out in the legal basis of Horizon Europe.

Questions:

10.1. Have you received funding from a Joint Undertaking or Article 185 initiative under Horizon 2020? *[Yes/No; mandatory]*
    If the answer is YES, please specify which one(s).

10.2. Have you been a partner in a Joint Undertaking or Article 185 initiative under Horizon 2020? *[Yes/No; mandatory]*
    If the answer is YES, please specify which one(s).

10.3. How to most effectively improve the experience in participating in the calls and activities in the context of European Partnerships? *[Answers range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) and 'I don't know'; optional]*
    – By ensuring that the calls would be accessible on the Funding and Tenders Portal;
    – By ensuring better communication of opportunities for funding in the context of partnerships;
    – By ensuring a single set of rules for participation and for funding (i.e. application of Horizon Europe rules for participation without or with very limited derogations);
    – By harmonising and centralising submission, evaluation, and reporting procedures;
    – By ensuring better dissemination and exploitation of results;
    – Other (Please specify).

10.4. How could we make European Partnerships more attractive for prospective partners? *[Open question; optional]*

3.11 Synergies between EU funding programmes

State of play

The objective for facilitating and operationalising synergies between different funding instruments, already now and even more in the future programming period, is to maximise the quantity, quality and impact of R&I investment across Europe, no matter the funding source. Combining R&I investments of Cohesion Policy funding with world-class R&I initiatives supported by Horizon 2020/Horizon Europe can also help to mobilise under-exploited R&I potential across the Union, spread excellence across Europe and achieve significant impacts on the economy.

Over the last programming period (2014-2020), the Commission has been fully engaged in the development of key synergies-enabling conditions, in particular with the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF), and more broadly with any other public source of funding implemented by national and/or regional bodies. Amongst the different possibilities for achieving synergies, one can highlight the following:

– **Sequential funding**, with the existing possibilities for 'upstream' synergies (ERDF support for R&I capacity building) and 'downstream' synergies (exploitation of Horizon results through ERDF/ESF+ funding).

– **Cumulative funding scheme**, with the possibility to derogate from the non-cumulative principle for combination of funds, but subject to the absence of double funding (i.e. EU grants cannot cover the same expenditure/cost items).

The **Seal of Excellence (SoE)**, as a high-quality label awarded to projects submitted to Horizon 2020 which were deemed to deserve funding but did not receive it due to budget limits. It recognises the value of the proposal and supports the search for alternative funding.

What is new in Horizon Europe[7]

Horizon Europe is designed to be implemented in synergy with other Union funding programmes. It seeks synergies with other Union programmes, from their design and strategic planning, to project selection, management, communication, dissemination and exploitation of results, to monitoring, auditing and governance.

Synergies in future Horizon Europe and Cohesion Policy regulatory frameworks (2021-27) build on the existing provisions, but with a number of improved elements for implementation.

All the existing synergies-enabling conditions and implementation options will be continued and further encouraged/expanded throughout a full range of enhanced/new regulatory possibilities for synergies offered under Horizon Europe as follows:

Strategic level: The draft Horizon Europe legislation sets out the synergies that are expected with other funding programmes. Horizon Europe and Cohesion Policy regulations as before provide the strategic context for synergies.

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[7] Currently subject to inter-institutional negotiation

<u>Cumulative funding</u>: Funding in the same operation under Horizon Europe and cohesion will be made easier, in particular as support from each programme can be calculated on a 'pro rata' basis.

<u>Seal of Excellence (SoE) and programme co-fund:</u> Simplified and more attractive funding conditions under which a national and/or a regional funding body may provide – on a voluntary basis – alternative support to Horizon Europe SoE-projects, and to programme co-fund. Horizon Europe work programmes will specify under which calls the Seal will be awarded. ERDF Managing Authorities may also receive details on Seal recipients in their regions subject to confidentiality agreements.

<u>Transfer</u>: With a view to avoiding overlaps and duplication and increasing the leverage of Union funding, transfers from other Union programmes to Horizon Europe activities can take place. In such cases, they will follow Horizon Europe rules.

Main orientations proposed

The legislative process in Horizon Europe, as well as in any other Programmes concerned, will ensure that the necessary provisions are in place to allow for an optimal practical deployment of the different synergies schemes mentioned above.

In particular, and in order to tap into the full potential of the 'Seal of Excellence' projects, Member States or regional authorities must be offered the possibility to support these high quality 'Seal' proposals at the same funding intensity and cost eligibility conditions provided by Horizon Europe. They should be able to do it with the minimum administrative burden possible, both for the funding body and for the applicant.

In that respect, the European Commission has in parallel launched a targeted review of the General Block Exemption Regulation (GBER) regarding State aids rules[8]. The purpose of the amendments is to modify the GBER in a targeted way in order to facilitate the combination of national funding and funding from the EU budget. More concretely, the proposal is to revise the GBER to make it possible for Member States to implement State aid measures without prior notification, among others for Research and Development and Innovation ("R&D&I") projects having received a Seal of Excellence under Horizon 2020 or Horizon Europe, as well as co-fund projects and Teaming actions under Horizon 2020 or Horizon Europe.

In its implementation of Horizon Europe, the Commission aims to fully take into account this new approach on State aid.

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[8] http://ec.europa.eu/competition/consultations/2019_gber/index_en.html

Eventually, maximising the take-up of projects with Seals of Excellence is crucial for significant impact. Therefore, appropriate/enhanced means of information will be further developed and 'Community of Practice' will be continued and strengthened, so that any national and/or regional funding body can be adequately informed and consider the possibility of providing alternative funding.

Questions:

11.1. Are you familiar with other EU funded programmes? *[Yes/No; mandatory]*

If answer is YES:
a) Please specify the programme(s) you are familiar with (CEF, COSME, Erasmus +, European Regional Development Fund, Interreg, LIFE…) *[Open question; optional]*

b) Would you consider that synergies between different EU funded programmes could be useful to promote the deployment and uptake of research results? *[Answers range from 1 (not useful at all) to 5 (really useful) and 'I don't know'; optional]*

11.2. What areas and/or types of projects require adaptations in order to improve synergies amongst EU funded programmes? In your view, what would be the key enabling features for making these synergies happen (joint calls between different EU programmes, sharing implementation data, etc.)? *[Open question; optional]*

11.3. Have you received a Seal of Excellence under Horizon 2020? *[Yes/No; mandatory]*

11.4. Do you think that simplified State aids rules will enable stronger uptake of Seal of Excellence projects by national and/or regional public authorities? *[Answers range from 1 (not at all) to 5 (to a great extent) and 'I don't know'; optional]*

11.5. To which extent do you agree with the following statements? *[Answers range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) and 'I don't know'; optional]*
- To preserve the chances to obtain alternative funding, Seal of Excellence should be issued only for limited type of calls under Horizon Europe;
- Information on proposals receiving the Seal of Excellence should be shared with interested financing authorities (prior consent of the applicants).

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4 List of acronyms

CSA	Coordination and Support Action
CFS	Certificate of Financial Statement
D&E	Dissemination & Exploitation
ECA	European Court of Auditors
EIC	European Innovation Council
EIT	European Institute of innovation & Technology
ERC	European Research Council
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESF	European Social Fund
ESIF	European Structural and Investment Funds
FP	Framework Programme
FP7	Seventh Framework Programme for Research
GBER	General Block Exemption Regulation
IA	Innovation Action
IPR	Intellectual Property Rights
KIC	Knowledge and Innovation Communities
MFF	Multiannual Financial Framework
MGA	Model Grant Agreement
NCP	National Contact Point
RIA	Research and Innovation Action
RES	Research Enquiry Service
SoE	Seal of Excellence
SPA	Systems and Processes Audits
TFEU	Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
TRL	Technology Readiness Level