



# CSIC – comments to the amendments adopted by the European Parliament & Council’s partial general approach on Horizon Europe.

*(December 2018)*

The European Commission (EC) published its proposal for the two documents that will make up the future Research and Innovation (R&I) Framework programme – **Horizon Europe**<sup>i</sup> on June 2018.

Following the ordinary legislative procedure, the European Parliament adopted its amendments on both documents on first reading<sup>iiiii</sup> on December, 12<sup>th</sup> 2018.

At the same time that discussions were being held on the Parliament, the Council of the EU agreed its position (partial general approach) on the regulation on Horizon Europe on November, 30<sup>th</sup> 2018.

The three European institutions involved in Horizon Europe’s legislative process, the European Commission, the Parliament and the Council of the EU, are making huge efforts to reach an agreement as soon as possible, so that the programme can be up and running on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2021.

In preparation for the upcoming negotiations, the **Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (CSIC)**, as the biggest Spanish research institution, and one of the major players in the current Framework Programme, Horizon 2020<sup>iv</sup>, would like to bring the following issues to the attention of the European Commission, the Parliament and the Council, and thus play an active role and contribute to the preparation of the next R&I Framework Programme, Horizon Europe.

## **Budget**

In the current Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2021 – 2027 negotiations, the CSIC supports the proposal from the European Parliament (EP) to increase the general budget to EUR 120 billion. As the *LAB – FAB – APP. Investing in the European future we want*<sup>v</sup> report states, in Horizon 2020 only one out of four proposals evaluated as of high quality are being funded, leaving out three excellent projects that could have had great impact in the EU. An increase in the general budget will allow funding more excellent proposals and would improve the Programme’s success rates and its potential impact. It will also help to “*improve our ranking among the global competition and to maintain our scientific and industrial leadership*”<sup>vi</sup>”, and our position with our key competitors.

We very much welcome the initiative of the European Parliament concerning the distribution between pillars and expressing their components in percentages of the total budget in order to facilitate the negotiations and maintain their share should any changes occur to the total budget.



## Excellent research

The **research dimension** should be integrated on the whole Programme, including Pillar III with the EIC and the EIT, as part of the *Knowledge triangle*. Horizon Europe should support research and innovation (R&I) in all the stages, both for collaborative and individual projects, covering the whole R&I cycle.

Limiting the scope of the Programme to higher TRLs or give it an “innovation-only” approach - *funding only what can give economic outputs in the short to medium term* - may result in a loss of disruptive and breakthrough knowledge. This can, in the end, damage European competitiveness and society wellbeing in the long-term, as well as the loss of the value that excellence in research and innovation can create for future generations.

Investing in **fundamental excellent research** will not only lead to the creation of disruptive and breakthrough innovation, but will also attract excellent scientist to the European Research Area (ERA) and avoid the so feared brain drain that most European Countries are facing, Spain among them. In this sense, the European Research Council (ERC), the Marie Skłodowska Curie Actions (MSCA) and European Infrastructures have proved their worth as crucial elements supporting excellent science.

The **ERC** has already been established as the beacon of excellent research performed in Europe at global scale. It should be maintained and reinforced during the next R&I FP. In this context, instruments such as the PoC, directed to “support faster translation of new discoveries into commercial or socially valuable products, processes, and services” should serve as a link between excellent research performed by the ERC grantees and the excellent innovation that comes with it. In addition, we believe that expanding the eligibility deadlines for researchers with excellent ideas to start or consolidate their own teams is a much-needed measure to include in the current landscape of the researcher career path in Europe.

At the same time, the **MSCA** should continue in Horizon Europe, with a higher budget than in Horizon 2020. Opening the MSCA scheme to other areas is a positive measure, as long as the budget comes from those areas, and not from the MSCA dedicated budget that should be only focused on a bottom-up approach.

Likewise, the European **R&I Infrastructures** contribute and foster collaboration and excellent interdisciplinary research and innovation in Europe, also attracting highly qualified scientists and innovators.

## Evaluation

The CSIC agrees with reducing the R&I gap within the regions of the European Union, and the **Strengthening the European Research Area** part of the programme will play a key role in achieving this objective. But including geographical distribution, such as the number of widening countries participating in a project, as an evaluation criterion through the entire Programme is not the appropriate approach to solve this problem or the lower participation rates of these regions. These are



issues that should primarily be faced at national or regional levels. Projects funded by Horizon Europe should clearly demonstrate their European Added Value and that the partners included in the selected consortia are the best in their fields to do the work and to achieve the results, regardless of their location. Otherwise, we could be seriously limiting the scientific scope of the proposals and addressing this issue “in wording only” to achieve the highest scores.

The criteria to be applied to the evaluation of proposals under Horizon Europe, in continuation with Horizon 2020, are scientific excellence, impact and quality and efficiency of the implementation of the action. For ERC actions the main criterion should always be scientific excellence.

As we have already expressed several times, special care should be taken when defining the impact criteria, not limiting it solely to economic impact, but including also the scientific, societal and environmental aspects and their benefits they could bring to the competitiveness and social welfare of the Union in the long-term, as well as the value that excellent research can bring for future generations.

### Funding instruments

The CSIC, in general terms, agrees with the proposal from the EP of to include the **Fast Track to Research and Innovation** instrument to some actions, reducing the time-to-grant and, thus, allowing faster access to funds for small consortia, provided that it is open to all kinds of legal entities and not restricted mainly to the participation of SMEs like in H2020. However, the kind of actions that can benefit from this scheme and their dedicated budget should be well defined during the strategic planning or in the Work Programmes, along with the explanation of the necessity to shorten the deadlines. Establishing a specific figure or share of the Programme’s budget at this stage may be premature.

The follow-up of the **SME instrument** in Horizon Europe, based on its success on Horizon 2020, has been very demanded by different stakeholders including those from Spain where it has been very rewarding. But this instrument’s place is Pillar III, as part of the European Innovation Council (EIC). Pillar II is dedicated to collaborative research, and instruments under other pillars can and should have links with the clusters and missions on this pillar and all along the Programme.

### Simplification

We very much appreciate the simplification measures taken by the Commission, the Parliament and the Council, especially in relation to the **rules for participation**, including, for the sake of clarity, the recent proposals for modifications in the naming of the three pillars, the introduction of new definitions such as those of “SME”, “affiliated entity” or the different types of actions. We also support the Council’s introduction of the article related to the Model Grant Agreement. However, there is still some information missing specifically regarding personnel costs in continuation to those of Horizon 2020, which would be of great help for the future participants in the Programme.



Finally, we acknowledge the efforts from the Parliament and the Council in better defining the **Strategic Planning** process and the managing structures, selection and implementation of **Missions** and **European Partnerships**. Nevertheless, the role that the FET Flagships will play in the Programme either as missions or as partnerships has still to be better defined. We also welcome the general approach of including **Social Sciences and Humanities** (SSH) across the Programme, along with societal engagement and science education activities.

Taking all this into consideration, the CSIC reaffirms once more its commitment in promoting excellence in science and innovation and its willingness to work with the European Union Institutions and the rest of European research and innovation organisations in the preparation of the next R&I Framework Programme.

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<sup>i</sup> The **Regulation establishing Horizon Europe – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, laying down its rules for participation and dissemination** (to abbreviate “the rules for participation and dissemination”), and **The Decision on establishing the specific programme implementing Horizon Europe the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation** (to abbreviate “the specific programme”).

<sup>ii</sup> Amendments adopted by the European Parliament on 12 December 2018 on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing Horizon Europe – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, laying down its rules for participation and dissemination (COM(2018)0435 – C8-0252/2018 – 2018/0224(COD)) (Ordinary legislative procedure: first reading) (<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P8-TA-2018-0509+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>)

<sup>iii</sup> Amendments adopted by the European Parliament on 12 December 2018 on the proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on establishing the specific programme implementing Horizon Europe - the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (COM(2018)0436 – C8-0253/2018 – 2018/0225(COD)) (Ordinary legislative procedure: first reading) (<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=P8-TA-2018-0510&language=EN&ring=A8-2018-0410>)

<sup>iv</sup> The CSIC is the 4th European Institution in terms of H2020 participations (number of actions). December 2018. H2020 Dashboard.

<https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/dashboard/sense/app/93297a69-09fd-4ef5-889f-b83c4e21d33e/sheet/PbZjnb/state/analysis>

<sup>v</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/research/evaluations/pdf/archive/other\\_reports\\_studies\\_and\\_documents/hlg\\_2017\\_report.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/research/evaluations/pdf/archive/other_reports_studies_and_documents/hlg_2017_report.pdf)

<sup>vi</sup> **“Knowledge is Europe’s engine”**. Declaration of The Presidents of Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche (CNR), Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS), Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (CSIC), Helmholtz-Gemeinschaft, Leibniz-Gemeinschaft and Max-Planck-Gesellschaft. November 2018. <https://www.mpg.de/12498969/declaration-on-european-research.pdf>