

KEY MESSAGES

EUROPEAN COMMISSION PROPOSAL FOR HORIZON EUROPE

The proposed budget increase for R&I to €100 billion in the Multiannual Financial Framework for 2021-2027 is highly welcomed, but not ambitious enough to deliver the programme's objectives of providing major impetus to Europe's future prosperity and well-being. A major additional increase for the budget for Horizon Europe to at least €120 billion¹ or even €160 billion² is needed to deliver the European Research Area and to successfully translate Europe's excellent science into innovation of societal impact. To guarantee the excellence of the programme, countries currently associated to Horizon2020 should remain associated to Horizon Europe.

Pillar I – Open Science

- To find solutions to the pressing challenges of today's society in a competitive global environment, Europe needs to be attractive for talent. **ERC grants and Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA)** are the EU's **key instruments to attract and foster promising young talent**. **Budget allocations** need to **reflect the crucial importance** of these instruments. Severe oversubscription as already experienced in Horizon 2020, particularly in MSCA, will discourage the brightest and best brains. The budget for Pillar I therefore needs to rise proportionally with the overall budget increase of the programme, particularly to explore the full added value of bottom-up collaboration on excellent research and research training supported by ERC Synergy Grants and MSCA Innovative Training Networks, respectively.

Pillar II – Global Challenges and Industrial Competitiveness

- Cross-cutting **clusters** will help address the global challenges by encouraging **interdisciplinary** and **cross-sectoral cooperation**. Programme management (e.g. the structure of programme committees and proposal evaluation) needs to reflect this approach.
- Whilst crucial enablers and largely cross-cutting in nature, **digital technologies are not sufficiently mainstreamed**. The cluster 'digital and industry' covers different 'digital' topics, but the digital dimension of the other clusters seems comparatively weak. The field of cybersecurity is only embedded in the 'inclusive and secure societies cluster' even though cybercrime and terrorism can be considered as one of the biggest challenges of our future society affecting all fields of life e.g. health and mobility (autonomous driving). It is essential that the **"Digital Europe" Programme is developed hand in hand with Horizon Europe** to allow for **maximum synergies** and avoid duplication.

¹ As recommended by the European Parliament in its report on Horizon 2020 of June 6, 2017.

² As recommended in the "LAB – FAB – APP" report of July 2017 of the High Level Group chaired by Pascal Lamy.

- The EuroTech Universities Alliance welcomes the description of **impact at mission level** to help facilitate cross-disciplinary thinking and the involvement of different actors. However, the process to define missions and evaluate related projects needs to be as **lean, unbureaucratic and transparent** as possible. The instruments used under Pillar II should give the research and innovation community the flexibility and freedom to jointly define how they can contribute to solving a challenge.
- The current FET Flagships and those currently under preparation should be given the opportunity to grow under Horizon Europe. Such continuity would signal the strong political commitment necessary to guarantee and sustain the involvement of the best scientists.
- The **distribution of budget** between the **global challenge clusters** is **questionable**. The budget increase for the 'food and natural resources' cluster is disproportionate to the relative stagnation of budgets for equally important challenges linked to health, digital and industry, or climate, energy and mobility. A careful balance is to be struck between the objectives of pillars I and II, openness and competitiveness, especially as regards confidentiality requirements.

Pillar III – Open Innovation

- As the Annexes to the Proposal for a Decision on establishing the specific programme rightly point out, "open and excellent science is inextricably linked to the achievement of world leading innovation". The **European Innovation Council**, and in particular the new Pathfinder, is a **crucial endeavour to cement the linkages between science and innovation**. For the first time, this new element in Horizon Europe will make it possible to provide **person-based grants to individual innovators** affiliated with research institutions. An innovation grant scheme for early stage technology constitutes a truly novel approach in European innovation support, effectively **closing one of the crucial gaps in the value chain**. Supporting innovators located within universities and research organizations opens access to highly valuable innovation potential previously untapped.
- Based on our experience within the EuroTech Universities Alliance, we welcome that **groups of collaborating innovators** are foreseen to also be **eligible** for support in the Pathfinder, not just the single innovator.
- The competitiveness objective of Pillar III can only be achieved by way of collaboration with excellent partner countries. The Pathfinder should therefore be open to Associated Countries.
- The Pathfinder and Accelerator are both needed to address the support needs of the entire value chain. However, the **budget** between the two elements, **Pathfinder and Accelerator**, needs to be **balanced** (50-50) to send a signal of encouragement to Europe's science-based innovators. The Open Innovation Pillar is truly complementary to the Open Science Pillar and if set up properly, the European Innovation Council does indeed have the **potential** to reach **similar global prestige** as the **European Research Council**.

- The EuroTech Universities Alliance welcomes the ambition to **better connect cross-border innovation ecosystems**. This should be considered an essential strategy to support the **scaling-up of Europe's industry** and promote a more balanced development of the European Research Area. The powerful relation between excellent scientific research and education at universities leads to creative and disruptive technological innovation within these ecosystems thanks to the transfer of scientific knowledge to the next generation of researchers, entrepreneurs and skilled employees for industry. Universities and particularly **university alliances** already act as innovation hubs and **major facilitators for the cross-border connection of unique high-tech ecosystems**. Programme definition should therefore build on the involvement of such players as well as their networks of partners including incubators, acceleration programmes, etc.

Strengthening the European Research Area

- Over the last months, increasing emphasis has been put on **university networks as drivers for the modernization of Higher Education** – and the EuroTech Universities Alliance welcomes the European Commission's intention to create a new funding instrument under Erasmus+ and to provide **dedicated complementary support in Horizon Europe**.
- The EuroTech Universities Alliance sees a strong added value in developing **long-term trust-based exchange on core challenges** related to the modernization of universities (e.g. how to best embrace Open Science, how to promote attractive research careers, how to implement innovative doctoral training, how to promote entrepreneurial culture and successful technology transfer activities, to name just a few). While the current Horizon 2020 instruments enable collaboration on research themes and the Erasmus+ programme enables collaboration on educational matters, there is currently no meaningful instrument at EU level to promote collaboration on these more structural matters.
- With Horizon Europe there is thus a unique opportunity to develop more **systematic, comprehensive and long-term support for the definition and implementation of collaborative, bottom-up, cross-border initiatives** to drive the modernization agenda. Horizon Europe should not only provide the highly necessary trigger and resource to facilitate such initiatives paving the way to institutional change but move beyond and **support** essential building blocks of dynamic networks. In the experience of the EuroTech Universities Alliance, these are e.g. **small groups of creative researchers and science-based innovators working across borders and disciplines on interdisciplinary topics** which are defined jointly and bottom-up. The **FET Open Principles** provide relevant inspiration in this regard.
- As part of **Sharing Excellence**, the proposed Teaming and Twinning actions would gain in attractiveness for leading institutions if not only the partnering and linking activities, but also **real research activities** in collaboration with the partner institutions would qualify for funding. The **low success rates** make the programme less attractive to all parties. The **new instruments in support of the modernization of Higher Education** will also be vital in the future to successfully address the "innovation divide".

THE EUROTECH UNIVERSITIES ALLIANCE IS VERY OPEN TO DISCUSSING THE ABOVE VIEWS IN MORE DETAIL WITH KEY STAKEHOLDERS AND DECISION MAKERS, ESPECIALLY AS REGARDS THE EUROPEAN INNOVATION COUNCIL AND SUPPORT FOR INNOVATION ECOSYSTEMS, SUPPORT FOR THE MODERNIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION/THE EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES INITIATIVE AND MARIE SKLODOWSKA CURIE ACTIONS.

Previous EuroTech Universities Alliance Position on FP9 ([Download](#))

About the EuroTech Universities Alliance

The EuroTech Universities Alliance is a strategic partnership of leading universities of science and technology committed to excellence in research and jointly developing solutions to the grand challenges of society. The members are: Technical University of Denmark (DTU), École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL), École Polytechnique (L’X), Eindhoven University of Technology (TU/e) and Technical University of Munich (TUM).

By promoting in-depth collaboration across research and education, as well as nurturing innovation and entrepreneurship, the Alliance combines the complementary strengths of its members to achieve multi-scale initiatives of high impact to society and industry. The Alliance engages with all societal actors to raise awareness of the opportunities offered by science and technology.

In 2017, the Alliance has launched a vision for a Joint Innovation Concept, connecting its high-tech innovation hubs to solve societal challenges.

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