

Statement of the Austrian Academy of Sciences on HORIZON 2020

The Austrian Academy of Sciences (OeAW) warmly welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the European Commission's consultation on HORIZON 2020. The OeAW admits to the completion of the ERA. The OeAW strongly encourages progressively working on the realisation of a Single Market for Researchers where money follows the researcher, social security rights of the Member States are more compatible and thus transferable to the same extent as (young) researchers are mobile and flexible. We foster efforts establishing a sound career plan in the EU beginning with coordinated measures as early as Science Education can start with the overall aim of finally attracting the most excellent researchers of the world.

Excellence

The OeAW favours the proposed measures boosting the potential of ERC embedding the principles of excellence and bottom up research in all disciplines. Thus, it endorses the strong and independent role of the ERC and backs the intention to award a significantly higher proportion of funding to the ERC. ERC stands for encouraging (young) researchers to be part of the world-class excellence community in frontier research, implementing individual career development plans, strengthening the role of the principle investigator (PI). The implementation of Horizon 2020 will make sure that both the Starting and Advanced Investigator Grants will continue to yield excellent research in the years to come and will open up great opportunities for researchers in Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH).

The OeAW is strongly supportive of promoting the mobility of researchers as provided by Marie Curie Actions. We consider the continuation and strengthening of Marie Curie Actions an indispensable feature of the Innovation Union. We are fully convinced that in the period 2014-2020 Marie Curie Actions will prove to be a valuable and essential tool guaranteeing brain circulation and fostering the interconnectedness of researchers belonging to all disciplines including SSH.

Societal Challenges

The redefinition of collaborative projects is considered beneficial for researchers. The Societal Challenges as identified under Horizon 2020 mirror the most ardent questions the world has to resolve pooling the efforts of the best researchers from different countries. These questions are actually also found in the research foci of the OeAW. Basically the following Societal Challenges identified under Horizon 2020: (1) Health, demographic change and wellbeing and (6) Inclusive, innovative and secure societies open up opportunities intensifying research cooperation in the OeAW's fields of expertise.

Bringing together different fields and disciplines including SSH and cross-cutting actions will surely contribute to resolve the major concerns of EU citizens. When adjusting or redefining the Societal Challenges in the course of changes and developments over the years a formal consultation process of scholars should be initiated.

Simplification

We strongly support the simplification provided by the new regulatory framework. We especially welcome the minimum requirements that will be given in the GA with regard to time recordings as well as the non-requirement of any time recording of researchers dedicating 100% of their work to the project (Art 25(3) 2011/0399(COD))

We are particularly satisfied with the 20% flat rate model for indirect costs. We believe that this will generally make the development of a project explicitly easier with regard to calculations and budgeting for the coordinator and the consortia as a whole (Art 24 2011/0399(COD)).

Furthermore we consider it to be a real achievement to establish a uniform funding rate for all beneficiaries of max. 100% and max. 70% with regard to activities such as prototyping, testing, demonstration, piloting, experimental development (Art 22 2011/0399 (COD)). With regard to the involvement of the industry it is particularly important to note that the mere existence of industry-related "demonstration" or "testing" are not preventing a collaborative project from being funded up to a max. of 100%. Further clarification on this point is needed.

We welcome that the VAT can be considered eligible. As to this point we expect that prior certification of the beneficiary guarantees legal certainty. We clearly favour the intention to abolish all interests on pre-financing in the financial statements.

It makes sound sense to abolish the extrapolation as a consequence of audits.

All the proposed structural simplification measures will definitely contribute to making the preparation of proposals as well as the management of projects easier. Thus, it would be advisable to anticipate the implementation of these rules even for the period prior to 2014 in order to grant these achievements already in the course of the realisation of projects under the last calls within the FP 7.

We appreciate the efforts in providing a single user-friendly IT platform, a concise set of IP rules, and harmonising the legal terminology.

International Cooperation

The Austrian Academy of Sciences recommends paving the way for more symmetry with regard to third country funding schemes. As to future international cooperation the OeAW supports the focus on enlargement and neighbourhood countries as well as to emerging countries under Horizon 2020.

Women in Science

The OeAW favours any measures encouraging women to play an ever growing and active role and thus exploiting all opportunities Horizon 2020 provides for. We stress the necessity of covering childcare services enabling women to participate in events related to EU funded initiatives beyond normal work hours as eligible costs (e.g. conferences, evening events and events of several days' duration out of town).