

University-University and University-Industry alliances and networks – promoting European integration and growth

The Framework Programme as instrument for strengthening partnerships for research and innovation in the European Union

Jacques Verraes, Assistant to the Deputy Director General for Innovation and ERA, European Commission

Dear Professor Azzone, Dear Professor Horvat, Dear rectors and presidents of European Universities of Technology, ladies and gentlemen

Deputy Director General Rudolf Strohmeier who is responsible in Directorate General Research and Innovation for inter alia the policies surrounding the realisation of the European Research Area sends you his best regards and regrets not being able to be present here today. He has asked me to address you today on his behalf which I will do with great pleasure.

It is no exaggeration to state that the new research and innovation funding Framework Programme Horizon 2020 is one of Europe's most focussed multi-annual endeavours to respond to the economic crisis. Horizon 2020 invests in future jobs and growth. Horizon 2020 addresses the concerns of real people, you and me, about our livelihoods, our safety and our environment, and it is a powerful effort to strengthen the global position of the European Union in research, in innovation and in technology.

The good news is that we remain on schedule to adopt the legislation for Horizon 2020 in time to have the new Framework Programme and its Work Programme operational at the start of the new year, that is only a good 90 days ahead of us.

The current on-going and intense negotiations with Member States and Stakeholders are rather unique, because the legal foundation on which basis the work programme will be based is not yet adopted either. The work programme will implement legislation that still has to be adopted. But this is the way in which we can have a seamless transition from the current Framework Programme, FP7 to the new one.

The better news is that Horizon 2020 will be a break from the past, and will come with significant improvements compared to the current Framework Programme.

It will be a single programme that brings together three separate programmes. In the first place the Eight Research & Innovation FWP, second the innovation aspects of the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme also known as CIP and third the EU Contribution to the European Institution of Innovation and Technology.

With a budget of over 70 bln Euro, it is a significant increase of the 53 bln Euro for the FP 7programme that will expire this year. This means many things, but in particular that Europe is serious about putting money into research and innovation, and shows that the statement that

Research and Innovation count among the main instruments to overcome the current economic crisis, is not just lip-service to an idea, but means something real and genuine.

The focus is much more than in the past on innovation, all forms of innovation, from research to retail, as use to say. Innovative projects can be supported from the lab to the commercial exploitation. And Innovation will also include innovation in services and social innovation.

But maybe, the most important improvement of Horizon 2020 is the simplification. That means that it will be much easier to access project funding, for companies, universities and research institutes in the EU and beyond. There will be a single set of rules, less paperwork, and faster funding, the so-called time-to-grant.

Horizon 2020 has three pillars:

Under the Excellent Science pillar, it will strengthen the position of the European Union in science with a budget of over 24 bln Euro to give a boost to top-level research in Europe, and sports a very important funding increase of the budget for the very successful top-level research in Europe under the European Research Council.

With the Industrial Leadership pillar, with a budget of over 17 bln Euro, key technologies, access to capital and SMEs will be supported

The biggest part of the budget, almost 31 bln goes to the third pillar, Societal challenges, which aims at addressing seven societal challenges, ranging from climate change, to the development of sustainable transport and mobility, to making renewable energy more affordable and ensuring food safety. It also covers our security and a challenge that we all will have to face at an individual level, namely that of ageing.

What does this mean for the topic today: the strengthening of partnerships for research and innovation in the European Union? How does Horizon 2020 help?

I want to address the partnership approach from two angles.

In the first place, the way and manner in which Horizon 2020 assists cross-border cooperation between researchers and their organisations, such as universities and poly technical schools, and in the second place the wider policy context which is that of the building and achievement of the European Research Area.

Since 2012, the European Commission has opted for a much stronger Partnership-based approach to make the European Research Area work. The Partners are of course the Member States, but also the research funding and research performing organisations. The Commission set up a partnership with the main research stakeholder Umbrella Organisations, which are Science Europe, and the Nordic Funding Organisation NordForsk, the European Association of Research and Technology Organisations, EARTO, and at the level of Higher Education Institutes, the European University Association, the League of European Research

Universities, and since July this year, the Conference of Schools of advanced learning and Technology, CESAER.

Allow me to start with the partnership approach in the wider policy framework of the European Research Area, and finish with contribution that Horizon 2020 will make. Horizon 2020 is entirely dedicated to realise the ERA and to make it operational.

The European Research Area is the main political and legal concept of the European Union for the integration of the research and innovation sector. A European Research Area implies the existence of national research areas. Researchers, scientific knowledge and technologies are interacting at national level, and they should be able to do so at European level.

ERA is all about cooperation and fostering virtuous and viable partnerships.

A great deal of practical, legal and administrative obstacles hinders the optimal interaction between researchers that reside different Member States, and jeopardises the excellence in the production and use of knowledge and technology.

Think about straightforward obstacles as the language to apply for a research position, or the simple fact to know that a university or other research organisation has a job opening. But there are more elusive obstacles such as the acquisition or use of a grant by a non-resident of a country, or different project evaluation criteria and periods that impede teaming up with colleagues abroad to work together on a common project. You can add to the list from your own experience.

The idea is that removal or reduction of these obstacles will create a unified European research area that would be a kind of single market for research and researchers, and for knowledge.

In 2012, the European Commission identified 5 areas to work on to boost ERA: the effectiveness of national research systems, transnational cooperation and competition, including research infrastructures, an open labour market for researchers, gender, and knowledge circulation.

The research stakeholder umbrella organisations that I mentioned earlier have made written commitments to make progress in several of these priority areas, f.i. to publish all vacancies on EURAXESs, to make open access the norm, to contribute to the establishment of a European pension fund for researchers, or to use international peer review for project evaluations.

The umbrella organisations meet regularly with the Commission in the context of the so called ERA Stakeholder Platform, to discuss progress, issues of common interest and develop ERA Policy. In the mean-time, a network of staff of the organisations started to meet in the so-called "doers' network" to discuss about the nuts and bolts of operational implementation of the written commitments. This can provide a very beneficial bottom up policy contribution that can be dovetailed with top down discussions between Member States. I want to give you

one example of a partnership interaction. The European Strategic Forum for Research Infrastructures, ESFRI has decided to try to develop a charter for access to Research Infrastructures. The doers' network of the ERA Platform will shortly meet to formulate the operational needs of research performers and to a lesser degree the research funders, and produce its version of a charter for access to Research Infrastructures. In this manner a top-down & bottom-up approach can coincide to produce a document that is blessed by the Member States and wanted by the users.

Let me now turn to Horizon 2020 as the main instrument to achieve the European Research area, and in that manner, to promote cooperation and partnerships.

Two keywords must be mentioned here: "exemplary" and "incentive".

Horizon 2020 wants to be exemplary in all parts of the Work Programme to abet and underpin the policy priorities of ERA.

For instance, where ERA puts emphasis on promoting gender equality and balance in Research, Horizon 2020 targets gender as a cross-cutting issue and the upcoming Work Programme will embedded gender issues or focus in 10% of its calls. Another example is Open Access, which the Commission identified as main paradigm for public funded research, and which is now mandatory across the whole of Horizon 2020 and the work programme. A third example is the simple truth that mobile researchers should have grants that they can use across the European Research Area. You know that this is far from gained yet, but the grants under Horizon 2020 such as the ERC grants are fully portable across the EU. Horizon 2020 thus sets the example for ERA.

The other keyword was incentivising: Horizon 2020 aims at incentivising behaviour that emulates that which researchers, research funders and performers should display in a fully operational European Research Area. I want to mention here to possibility to fund the gold route to Open Access to publications that will facilitate circulation of knowledge (most likely a lump sum via the OpenAir network of 1000€per publication, for 3 publications per project for a period of up to two years after the termination of the contract). A large number of known and novel forms of cross-border cooperation (JTI, ETPs, KICs, contractual and non-contractual Public Private Partnerships etc) can obtain funding under Horizon 2020/

The very popular Marie Curie actions for example intend to make Europe attractive to young researchers. The implementation requires that partnerships are established by universities, research institutions, business, and SMEs to implement competitively selected research training programmes. My colleagues Xavier Prats will certainly come back to it.

Through promoting Smart Specialisation strategies, Horizon 2020 aims at promoting regional cooperation and partnerships.

The leadership in Key Enabling Technologies programme (think f.i. about advanced interfaces and robotics, photonics and nano-electronics) will combine Innovation activities with R&D and focus on mastering and deploying Key Enabling Technologies. A strong

private sector involvement is a prerequisite. The projects will thus be mainly implemented by Public Private Partnership;

Ladies and gentlemen,

I hope that the examples that I have given show that the question whether Horizon 2020 is an instrument for strengthening partnerships for research and innovation in the EU, can be answered by a wholehearted assertion that it does.

What is important to note is that the increase in partnerships is fosters the European Research Area. The challenge for the future will be to determine whether ERA can advance sufficiently in the partnership mode, or whether legislation is necessary to overcome obstacles to cooperation. The Commission adopted on 19 September a progress report on the realisation of the European Research Area that concludes that the partnership approach created new momentum for ERA, and that the Partners in the ERA Platform are moving together, or in other words: as partners our collective scientific endeavour which is about competitive cooperation.