



Universities united for the best Horizon Europe

In the wake of the European Commission's release of its outline for the Ninth Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (Horizon Europe), 14 European associations representing universities united to respond to the proposal. For universities, creating the best Horizon Europe possible is paramount as the programme is a key enabler in achieving European ambitions and strengthening values. By reinforcing research and innovation, Horizon Europe will impact the daily life of European citizens, European society as a whole and the European economy.

We therefore ask the European Parliament and the Council to support Horizon Europe and to incorporate the following necessary changes in order to ensure that it will fulfil the EU's ambitions:

- Increase the total budget.
- Review the budget allocation.
- Put the realisation of the European Research Area at the centre of Horizon Europe across all pillars.
- Foresee better linkages between research, innovation and education.
- Include a human and societal reflection, as well as options for fundamental research, in all clusters and missions.

Our first and most important recommendation is to **increase the total budget of Horizon Europe** and review its distribution. We have already jointly called for a doubling of EU spending on research and innovation in March, and we re-emphasise that message today: **€160 billion** is needed to realise the ambitions of Horizon Europe.

A bigger total budget would also help address our second concern: the need to **review the budget allocation**. Funding must be distributed with a focus on those programmes that have a proven track record in: generating EU added value; contributing to the European research and innovation landscape; and reinforcing European human capital. This is exactly what the **Marie Skłodowska Curie Actions and the European Research Council** in particular have delivered. For that reason, and to multiply the effects of their achievements, they **deserve a more substantial budget increase**.

Moreover, the **budget allocation to the clusters in pillar II needs revision**. While the overall budget for pillar II has increased substantially, the distribution of budgets is not equitably divided among clusters. We welcome the five-cluster approach, but a more balanced budget distribution must capture the fact that **they all are the most pressing challenges** our societies are facing.

We positively note the budget increase for “sharing excellence” in **pillar IV** as an important element in building the **European Research Area**. In this context, it is important to recall that its realisation **must be an overarching objective of Horizon Europe** and that sufficient investment and supportive frameworks on the national level are also needed to close the research and innovation divide across and within member states.

Universities have a clear and central role to play in addressing today’s global challenges and in helping to stimulate industrial competitiveness. No other type of organisation can address such issues in a holistic way, while also considering the societal dimension. Universities should therefore play a central role in developing and managing missions. Universities have a leading role in stimulating the transfer of research results to society and the market, mainly through highly-educated human capital. Therefore, **the role of universities in the European Innovation Council must be amplified and recognised. Linkages between research, innovation and education in Horizon Europe must be improved** and spread more broadly over the entire programme.

Finally, we call for **stronger human and societal approaches across the whole programme**, especially in some pillar II clusters. **Industry’s short-term interest should not prevail over society’s long-term benefits from Horizon Europe**. Even when the focus is on technology and close-to-market activities, reflections on how it affects our societies must be included. At the same time, addressing today’s global challenges and generating breakthrough innovations need fresh insights based on new research, not only projects that further develop already-known approaches. **Close-to-market activities should be complemented explicitly with fundamental research**.

There are many other aspects to the Horizon Europe proposal that our associations find important. Many of us will publish separate statements or papers in the coming weeks and months.

We look forward to continuing our work with the European Commission, the European Parliament and Council of the EU to support a timely approval of Horizon Europe and to actively engage in the co-creation process in order to make the Programme a success.

#UniversitiesForHorizonEU