



10 Recommendations for FP10

From the perspective of the community of
European research managers and administrators



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10 Recommendations for FP10: From the perspective of the community of European research managers and administrators

1. FP10 must have an ambitious and ring-fenced budget.
2. Empower the RMA profession through dedicated funding streams and budget lines in accordance with the ERA policy agenda.
3. Ensure a better balance between fundamental and innovation driven research funding.
4. Address the remaining challenges in mainstreaming Open Science.
5. Provide a more inclusive environment to enable the full participation of social sciences, arts, and humanities (SSH) disciplines.
6. Prepare to fully address anticipated increased ethics and integrity concerns.
7. Fully accessible and streamlined with reduced research bureaucracy.
8. Critically reflect on gender equality plans and move towards broader equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI).
9. Continue to strengthen global approaches to excellent R&I cooperation.
10. Further develop synergies with other EU and national funding programmes.

About EARMA

The European Association of Research Managers and Administrators (EARMA) represents research management and administration professionals in Europe. The membership forms the interface between research performing organisations (RPOs) and research funding organisations (RFOs), bridging cultural and legal differences between countries, academia, and industry, contributing to policy consultations, and managing the smooth running of research projects.

Our members have developed this viewpoint across all of the previous Framework Programmes (FPs), in particular FP7, Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe. The range of experience within EARMA's membership includes ideas generation, research development, proposal submission, grant management, impact, and the management of many other cross-cutting and technical aspects of the delivery of excellent European research and innovation (R&I).

Introduction

The following recommendations provide guidance on maximising FP10 to ensure that it is more inclusive, impactful, and efficient in addressing the needs and expectations of the R&I community in Europe based upon the learnings of research management professionals (RMAs), who have played and will continue to play a critical role in the implementation, participation, and communication in and of the new Framework Programme.

Recommendation 1: FP10 must have an ambitious and ring-fenced budget

It is of vital importance that EU investment in research and innovation is strengthened with national funding leveraged for the EU to retain its competitive position in the global economy. Well-funded excellent EU research bolsters the quality of life of its citizens, addresses major crises and transformations (most notably the twin transitions) in line with the path towards EU enlargement. According to the latest figures from Eurostat, gross domestic expenditure on research and development (R&D) in the European Union (EU) is below the United States and Japan. As of 2020, China has also surpassed the EU-27 in R&D investment. Historically, the EU has struggled to provide the Framework Programmes with sufficient budget to match the aim to address the key challenges facing Europe and the world. It is vital that the FP10 budget is ambitious and sufficient enough to address the immense challenges that lie ahead.

In preparation for FP10, EARMA recommends that the European Commission (EC) and the FP10 Expert Group provide an ambitious yet realistic costing of the proposed budget for FP10. EARMA considers the amount of at least €200 billion (as indicated in the joint statement by European universities representatives LERU, CE7 and The Guild¹) a good starting point². However, a robust costing exercise will need to be conducted. In this context, the so-called “Lamy report” for the previous Framework Programme provides a useful methodology³. For this purpose, it is also useful to consider the R&D gap between the EU Member States and the other advanced economies of the world and the potential role that the next Framework Programme can have in alleviating this disparity.

Given past experiences, it is crucial to ring-fence and protect the budget within FP10 to prevent diversion towards other emerging political priorities, as well as ensuring stability and predictability in funding for the duration of the programme. The RMA community points out that these aspects are crucial to maintain and enhance participation in the FP, ensuring that the potential of high scoring proposals are realised through additional funding.

Recommendation 2: Empower the RMA profession through dedicated funding streams and budget lines in accordance with the ERA policy agenda

The EARMA motto is “excellent research requires excellent research management”. Research, in all its forms, is a team and collaborative effort. In order to release the full potential of the R&I ecosystem for successful research, the team must include expert, engaged and motivated research managers and administrators.

The Council of the EU, in its conclusions on the new ERA (1 Dec. 2020)⁴, recognised the need for the professionalisation of science management, research management and administration at research performing organisations (RPOs) and research funding organisations (RFOs). It considered the added value of cooperation between training providers to develop research management specific professional development programmes and guidelines in relation to an area of work that becomes increasingly more complex over time. For that reason, the Council called on the EC to launch a pilot action resulting in the European Research Area (ERA) policy agenda Action 17.

While Action 17 and Horizon Europe (through the WIDERA instrument) currently support the development of the RMA profession, it is essential that the capacity building and strengthening of research management and administration across Europe, especially in Widening countries, is continued in FP10 to reduce disparities in research and innovation performance across the EU in addition to further supporting the work of RMAs. The RMA community is a cornerstone of success for RPOs and RFOs in European R&I and should be included in the future ERA Talent Portal and their role recognised in the European Charter for Researchers.

Therefore, EARMA calls for dedicated funding for the further professionalisation, networking and recognition of RMAs in FP10 within and outside the EU and Associated Countries (see recommendation 9). The introduction of dedicated budget lines would be a step in the right direction. EARMA also calls for a continuation of the research management focused ERA Policy Agenda action beyond 2027 to allow for discussion, alignment and coordination among Member States and the EC in providing concrete initiatives towards the recognition of the research management profession.

Recommendation 3: Ensure a better balance between fundamental and innovation driven research funding

Horizon Europe has provided a specific distribution between fundamental and applied research through its three pillars and the use of Technology Readiness Levels (TRL) in calls. With the creation of the European Innovation Council, Horizon Europe introduced a powerful instrument to address the gap between research excellence and the transformation of the findings into market opportunities. Some have argued that this has been at the expense of support for fundamental or pre-competitive research⁵. As demonstrated by recent research responses to COVID-19, it is clear that well-funded fundamental research is vital to prepare for future challenges and to feed into the innovation pipeline.

FP10 must provide sufficient funds for collaborative research and technological development calls to respect the principles of the programme laid out in the Horizon Europe regulation (art. 7.3)⁶. EARMA recommends a more bottom-up, less prescriptive, inclusive approach to calls linked to general priority areas in order to facilitate a greater level of innovative thinking in all R&I areas.

EARMA believes that only a diversity of funding in Pillar 2 (both lower TRL and higher TRL), will address the multiplicity of needs and types of research that are conducted in different disciplines and RPOs. We call on the EC to ensure a balance between lower and higher TRL research in the second pillar.

Provided it is adequately funded and streamlined (see recommendation 7), the Framework Programme should be large enough to fund the full range of research areas and types without resulting in a zero-sum net loss or gain for one or the other.

Recommendation 4: Address the remaining challenges in mainstreaming Open Science

Open Science aims to maximise the accessibility and sharing of research outputs, such as data, publications, and methodologies, to foster greater transparency, collaboration, and efficiency in scientific endeavours. In addition, Open Science also embodies a change in research moving towards a research culture which facilitates diversity and equity.

The EC has been ahead of the curve in implementing Open Science in previous Framework Programmes. While Open Science has advanced in recent years, we are still not in a situation where it is the “modus operandi” of the scientific system.

Funder rules therefore remain important and EARMA advocates that FP10 addresses the remaining gaps and challenges in this area both in the fair sharing of data as well as the necessary change in research culture.

The Open Access requirements for scientific publications in FP10 should be in line with the Swedish May 2023 Council conclusions which called for a scholarly publishing model that is not-for-profit, open access and multi-format, with no costs for authors or readers. In particular, the sometimes-excessive costs of article processing charges for publishing Open Access must be addressed by a) continuing to support Green Open Access (access through a repository) and its infrastructure, and b) encouraging alternative models such as Diamond Open Access and further developing platforms for access such as Open Research Europe.

FP10 continues to support making research outputs (research data and beyond) not only open but also FAIR – findable, accessible, interoperable, and re-usable. This will require further support for data management, such as the creation of a Horizon Europe Research Data Management Helpdesk, similar to the existing IP support desk and dissemination booster as well as providing additional funding for covering costs in making key datasets FAIR (in addition to project funding).

In its approach to Open Science, FP10 should keep the principle of “as open as possible, as closed as necessary”. This principle appropriately acknowledges the need for flexibility and careful consideration of commercial aspects, technological sovereignty, and data protection.

Research managers and administrators are at the forefront in supporting and promoting Open Science in all its diverse aspects and it have created new opportunities and areas of expertise for research management and administration. This is reflected in EARMA’s status as a signatory of Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA). We recommend that FP10 continues to support and implement the work of CoARA in reforming research assessment. Open Science will become a reality only when the evaluation of research truly changes.

Recommendation 5: Provide a more inclusive environment to enable the full participation of social sciences, arts, and humanities (SSH) disciplines

The full and meaningful inclusion of social sciences, arts and humanities in the Framework Programmes reflects a broader understanding that interdisciplinary approaches, combining natural and technical sciences with SSH, are essential for holistic, human-centred problem-solving. EARMA believes that SSH is crucial for addressing the complex societal challenges that Europe faces, requiring not just technological solutions

but also an understanding of the social, cultural, and behavioural aspects in order to fully address the complexity of contemporary societies, crises, and transformations in all European regions. Since the development of Horizon Europe, this is becoming more and more important.

To enhance participation of SSH in FP10, we strongly advocate for the inclusion of less prescriptive and low TRL calls in Pillar 2 for collaborative projects across all clusters, and a greater variety of consortia, even smaller and focused ones.

Horizon Europe has made efforts to incorporate SSH across its various clusters and Missions, in particular through the flagging of topics requiring SSH expertise. Despite these efforts, the depth and breadth of SSH integration and meaningful inclusion is not fully evident. It is clear that SSH perspectives are not consistently nor sufficiently embedded at the programme design stage⁷. EARMA recommends that “SSH Flagging” is monitored and improved accordingly across all clusters so that SSH perspectives are really present in funded projects.

RMAAs play a key role in facilitating and enabling the development and execution of truly interdisciplinary projects. For FP10, not only is it crucial that the relevant SSH experts and evaluators participate in the call drafting and in the evaluation panels of SSH Flagged calls, but also that evaluators receive specific training to effectively review interdisciplinary projects.

Recommendation 6: Prepare to fully address anticipated increased ethics and integrity concerns

Horizon Europe placed a strong emphasis on addressing and assessing potential ethics and integrity concerns at proposal stage. Research integrity, defined as adhering to professional norms and standards in conducting and reporting research, is also a cornerstone of Horizon Europe. As the landscape of research and innovation continues to evolve, FP10 will need to address both persistent, expanded, and emerging challenges such as AI, new technologies, data protection and more. In FP10, these elements will accelerate with enormous force, especially AI, not only in relation to integrity issues (proposal preparation), ethical issues (development and application of new AI-based solutions in humans), but also other new approaches such as robotics, augmented reality and genome editing. In addition, the new models of research assessment, guided by CoARA, will pose new challenges for scientific integrity.

EARMA has played and continues to play a key role, both through its participation in European projects in the field of integrity and ethics such as SOPs4RI, iRECS, Pattern, and, on the professionalisation of research management, RM Roadmap, and via the EARMA Ethics and Research Integrity Officers Network (ERION). EARMA calls

for the implementation of FP10 to involve the RMA profession specifically to adequately address ethics and research integrity issues.

Recommendation 7: Fully accessible and streamlined with reduced research bureaucracy

In Horizon Europe, efforts have been made to streamline and simplify the application process. At the same time, the scope and requirements of calls have expanded, making them more complex. Furthermore in Horizon Europe, significant delays to the finalisation of Work Programmes have caused tight timelines in the proposal preparation phase. While the EC has introduced several activities to reduce complexity in the implementation phase, the current landscape of EU research funding remains characterised by its complexity and multiplicity of rules and processes, which pose a significant barrier to efficient and effective research management. This complexity can lead to increased research bureaucracy, impeding excellent research whilst consuming considerable administrative resources. In addition, it acts as a deterrent to potential new applicants. Unfortunately, this is in direct conflict with the perception that the Framework Programme should be more accessible and open.

In the current landscape of European R&I funding, one significant challenge is the proliferation of diverse funding instruments and mechanisms. The multitude of instruments, often with slightly different rules, objectives, and application processes, can create a complex and sometimes overwhelming environment for researchers and administrators alike. This complexity not only hinders the accessibility of funding opportunities but can also lead to fragmented efforts in addressing key research challenges.

EARMA therefore recommends that the EC reviews, streamlines and improves information on access and participation in existing funding instruments. This could be particularly useful for partnerships, including EITs, which can be problematic in relation to their complexity and their accessibility for all R&I actors in Europe. This is also true for Missions and other instruments. An alignment between new and old initiatives must be sought in line with the final objective of building a streamlined R&I programme.

In preparation for FP10, EARMA also recommends reviewing the proposal template. It needs to be ensured that impact assessments in proposals are realistic and feasible, providing clear guidelines and examples for applicants and for evaluators. Where this is the case, the EC should also evaluate the efficiency gains of the reduced page limit in Horizon Europe (as compared to Horizon 2020). The proposal form part B is now too long and complex. Therefore, some parts could be moved to section A.

Furthermore, EARMA encourages the EC to launch a voluntary pilot scheme to make

funded proposals publicly available in selected funding calls, with due diligence given to ensuring that IP and sensitive information is properly handled. Regarding the assessment of research, EARMA advocates for the further implementation of CoARA in all areas of FP10, particularly in mono-beneficiary actions such as the European Research Council (ERC) and Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA). This needs to be coupled with the provision of better training for evaluators on horizontal issues such as gender dimension, AI, the “do no significant harm principle”, Open Science, SSH integration and impact.

From a research management and administration perspective, reducing bureaucracy remains important in FP10 and improving training for both evaluators and applicants. When implementing simplification measures, it is important to do so in a flexible manner, allowing organisations maximum flexibility in choosing those models that are best suited to them and making sure that beneficiaries’ national rules do not create barriers to participation. Finally, FP10 must be reviewed from a user perspective with a clear aim to focus on smoother implementation.

Recommendation 8: Critically reflect on gender equality plans and move towards broader equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI)

In Horizon Europe, significant emphasis has been placed on gender equality. This focus is evident in the requirement for (public) beneficiaries to have a Gender Equality Plan (GEP) at an institutional level. However, the implementation of these requirements has revealed challenges such as GEPs run the risk of becoming “tick-box” exercises.

EARMA therefore recommends that the EC conducts an independent study of the content of GEPs in Horizon Europe and based on the results considers how to best develop them further. Feedback received from our membership suggests that a gendered innovation approach is taken with EU projects. However, there is an appreciation that a transitional period is required towards the development of a framework that considers equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging (EDIB) more broadly.

For FP10, EARMA proposes that a strong culture of EDIB is at the core of the new Framework Programme. For this, the EC must continue to enable a thriving, balanced and inclusive research community.

Recommendation 9: Continue to strengthen global approaches to excellent R&I cooperation

A key element of FP10 must be the broadening of the global reach of EU research and

the circulation of talent for which RMA professionals are key enablers. EARMA members place considerable value in reinforcing international partnerships, notably through our international sister associations (NCURA and SRAI in the United States of America, SARIMA in Southern Africa, WARIMA in Western Africa, ARMS in Australasia, BRAMA in Brazil, CARA in Canada, CASSSP in China, MyRMA in Malaysia, RMAN-J in Japan and INORMS globally). These are crucial for advancing professional development opportunities, networking, best practice sharing and the overall professionalisation of research management.

There is significant potential to build and expand upon the international association agreements as per Horizon Europe. Association agreements should be negotiated at an accelerated pace to reduce uncertainty around collaboration opportunities.

Cooperation with strategic countries should also be intensified where needed (for example in key technologies) as well as on cross-cutting policy issues, such as EDI, Open Science, research ethics and integrity, resulting in reinforced dialogue.

EARMA calls for increased opportunities of collaboration with third countries in specific calls dedicated to the sharing of best practice in research management on a parity of esteem. This will encourage innovation in the sector and will provide benefits for the European R&I ecosystem at large. EARMA will continue to promote the sharing of best practice and opportunities for further global collaboration.

Recommendation 10: Further develop synergies with other EU and national funding programmes

There has been a drive in Horizon Europe to realise synergies with other EU funding programmes such as the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIFs) but also Erasmus+, Digital Europe and the Connecting Europe facility, with the aim of leveraging these collaborations for broader impacts in areas like education, digital transformation, and infrastructure development. Despite these efforts, actively promoting the combination of Horizon Europe funds with other EU funding sources remains complex due to differing aims, rules, eligibility criteria, and timeframes.

EARMA is of the view that FP10 needs to significantly enhance the synergies with other EU funding streams, in particular with Erasmus+, to fully realise the ambitions of the European Universities Alliances initiative which was partly funded by the SwafS programme in Horizon 2020. EARMA calls for the reinstatement of the SwafS programme in FP10.

It is important to simplify rules around access and the management of funding across different programmes, ensuring better alignment of objectives and calls, and including

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It is important to simplify rules around access and the management of funding across different programmes, ensuring better alignment of objectives and calls, and including

joint calls or complementary funding schemes that encourage projects to seek support from multiple sources. Targeted support from the EC to help applicants understand how to leverage synergies between different funding sources should also be provided. This guidance would support research management professionals to make the relevant linkages in maximising the use of multiple funding sources.

Additionally, research infrastructures are becoming increasingly important for European R&I as well as international collaborations. There are major European infrastructures funded through Member States in the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures (ESFRI) and smaller infrastructures that are vital for research and industrial partners. It is important that the next FP allocates enough resources to research infrastructures of different sizes. Local, national, and European resources must be used in synergy to keep their funding competitive and to answer the pressing issues in infrastructures such as sustainability, greening, access schemes, internationalisation, the role of AI, staff training and staff retention.

Conclusion

Our 10 Recommendations for FP10 are drawn from the extensive experience of professional research managers and administrators (RMAs) across various sectors and reflect a collective vision for a more efficient, impactful, and globally competitive Framework Programme. Our vision aligns with the broader goals of the European Union to maintain its leadership in global research, address key societal challenges, and foster sustainable and inclusive growth.

EARMA emphasises the key role that RMAs will play to ensure the successful implementation of FP10, specifically due to our unique position as a bridge between funding organisations, the scientific community, and policymakers. As integral players at the interface of research funding and execution, RMAs will be instrumental in ensuring that FP10 not only exceeds its stated objectives but will be able to pivot to the continuously evolving needs of the research and innovation community and society at large.

EARMA is fully committed to continuing the dialogue to prepare effectively for FP10. Our community is fully mobilised and ready to collaborate with a wide range of stakeholders to ensure that the next Framework Programme is well-positioned to meet the important challenges that Europe faces, that it delivers on its goals and, most importantly, that it will be correctly implemented to achieve success.

Recommendations

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Further information

For more information on EARMA, please visit: earma.org

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