

LITHUANIA'S POSITION PAPER FOR THE NEXT FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME (FP9)

Lithuania is committed and contributes to the co-creation of the European Research Area, therefore we welcome the opportunity to participate in the process of the interim evaluation of Horizon 2020 and provide insights for the next framework programme. We reckon that reflections on the interim period of Horizon 2020 may suggest improvements as well as encourage and deliver a certain contribution for a long-term period, which could be helpful in shaping the Commission's proposal for FP9 and the objectives of the upcoming next financial perspective.

At the same time, Lithuania acknowledges the importance of the social, political and economic context, which is constantly changing and may have an influence on the EU's strategic foresight in the area of research and development and innovation (R&D&I). Therefore, it is advisable to consider the Horizon 2020 interim evaluation and preliminary ideas for the next framework programme from a broader political and economic perspective, also taking into account the importance of creating synergies between related policy areas and funds and, particularly, the European Structural and Investment Fund (ESIF).

This position paper was prepared by the Ministry of Education and Science of Lithuania in close consultation with main national stakeholders, academic community and business representatives and is based on the findings and feedback of open discussions with them.

KEY POINTS

We consider that the structure with three pillars in a programme should be retained as it is well-justified and also fully and widely acceptable in terms of its continuation. The combination of initiatives for excellent science, industrial participation and social challenges encourages the dynamics of frontier research, orientation for business needs and addressing societal challenges. However, more attention should be given to open, scientific and bottom-up initiatives pursued on **the principle of collaboration and cooperation**. A **proper room for bottom-up approach** within the R&D&I agenda agreed on with a wide range of stakeholders would generate new scientific knowledge and scale up the market-oriented innovation capacity.

The **research and innovation agenda** should be projected in a way that the potential of R&D&I could be invoked for quick response to changing societal demands. Therefore, the future programme should provide for more flexibility, which would allow addressing future challenges about which society is not yet aware. The right balance between pre-defined topics and open calls on urgent hot issues should be found. Social sciences and humanities require to be given adequate focus in the programme and continue to be fully integrated when addressing grand challenges.

Greater emphasis should be put on FP9 as a strategic intervention into research and innovation systems of the EU and its Member States. Prioritizing the topics in accordance to the planned budget in the work programmes could foster coherence between FP9 and national agendas.

The number of initiatives should not increase in Horizon 2020 and the future framework programme. The EU research and innovation landscape is already relatively complicated to have a clear orientation and may be overlapping if more new initiatives are created as their proliferation may lead to duplication and fragmentation. This subsequently may hamper the efficiency and effectiveness of the whole programme and not deliver the expected impact and European added value. At the same time, it is necessary to ensure the principle of synergies and complementarity between different initiatives so as to properly address the changing needs of society, the stakeholders and the dynamics of various contexts as well as rationalise of the EU funding.

Horizon 2020 and the next framework programme should be **synergetic with** other EU policy areas, especially the cohesion policy. The possibilities to seek interactions **with ESIF should be fully explored and solutions need to be agreed upon**. Special attention should be paid to the issue of the state aid rules understood and interpreted alike in both funding programmes. Therefore we call the attention of the Commission to provide the Member States with clear and unified explanation regarding to the state aid rules as the negative effect might occur if the application of the mentioned rules varies greatly among Member States in the interpretation of the concept of economic activities pursued by universities and research institutes.

Investments in R&D&I both at the national and the EU level should increase for the next financial perspective to minimise the waste of efforts and ideas caused by oversubscription and as a prerequisite/guarantee for better inclusiveness of the programme. Global competition for talents, innovative ideas, jobs, investments imply the suggestion for Europe to invest even more in the improvement of its scientific and technological competitiveness. Simultaneously, business involvement in R&D&I policy area should be further encouraged and must clearly demonstrate

the leverage effect with public investments. Thus, a diversity of financial instruments (loans, guarantees, etc.) projected for large companies as well as large-scale and close-to-market projects should be used more efficiently to increase private investments. Meanwhile, grants should prevail in the next FP and remain the main funding instrument for the public institutions in collaborative R&D&I projects.

A funding rate of 100% of eligible costs for research and innovation actions as well as for coordination and support actions should be kept in the future programme.

Scientific excellence and quality principle and criteria should remain fundamental in the programme. At the same time, specific clear and transparent criteria should be developed for the impact part of projects eliminating as many ambiguities as possible. These should differ depending on the nature of projects. This would allow keeping the right balance between actual content and tasks, the quality of presentation of a project and value to society. The innovation component of the programme should serve as a catalyst of exploitation of scientific results in terms of social and economic impact. Focus on the entire knowledge chain should be ensured via the whole programme.

Moreover, the **balanced mix containing small-scale and large-scale projects** of different TRL levels should echo the main objectives of the programme as well as of its separate initiatives to deliver the most of European added value and impact expected. The results and impact of the large-scale projects need to be thoroughly analysed before defining future measures. While large-scale projects might potentially have a high impact, this impact could be limited to the specific region and lacking an overall positive effect as a whole. It should also be noted, that large scale projects for a single topic implies large consortia, which is rather impossible for a small Member State to lead. Certainly, large projects are quite difficult to administer and require relatively higher input of human and financial resources for their management. Differentiation between the scale of projects, which provides more opportunities for small and mid-scale projects, may offer greater possibilities for wider range of participants and higher impact for regional development. This would encourage smaller, but excellent players to potentially and fully contribute to the common search of the best solutions and echo the society's expectations when investing in research and innovation at the EU level.

Efforts for **widening participation** aimed at **inclusive excellence** at the Member State level should be continued and gain a special attention in order to avoid incoherent development of research excellence and possible loss of innovative potential within the EU. Current measures

need to be evaluated for the expected impact and improved, if appropriate, or the new ones applied. This should not only be focused on capacity building but also using or enhancing the existing excellence in the-so-called “underrepresented” Member States. In this regard, the Commission has to demonstrate the adherence to the EU values like inclusiveness and equality. European Research Area should be created with freely circulating scientific knowledge, technology insights, innovative ideas, open and fruitful collaboration. Rules for remuneration should be a tool to attract the best talents, encourage the formation of competitive merit-based career advancements. Only this would make possible Horizon 2020 and the next framework programme to pool scientific excellence and innovative capacities of all Member States. To tackle the current imbalance and enhance motivation for the participants to apply to the EU research and innovation programmes, flexible approach towards the researchers’ salary level should be explored for the reimbursement of personnel costs. We also consider inclusive excellence as a horizontal and cross-cutting element via all pillars of the FP, including ERC activities, and would advocate for further consideration and better exploitation of targeted measures in this respect. For instance, experience of COST activities generates the expected value in this sense, therefore the sustainability of its financing model should be ensured in the next financial period.

More specifically, the effect of Horizon 2020 actions under “Spreading excellence and widening participation“, particularly, the effect of Teaming, needs to be analysed and the conclusions made for its improvement. The possibility to make use of the best aspects of Teaming and Twinning calls should be explored. A flexible and less time-consuming tool such as Twinning with a possibility to include 10% of the total project budget dedicated for research costs (including consumables) could have a very positive effect on balancing the ERA potential and capacities.

The balance between support for the **ERA-nets, Co-funds, JPIs and other networking initiatives vs. open calls** for projects should be reconsidered. On the one hand, the networking initiatives are beneficial in terms of the integrated European Research Area and suppose to have a high leverage effect. On the other hand, the calls via these networks narrow the possibilities to involve the potential from all over Europe, as these calls usually are open only to the participants from the countries that are involved in the management of these networks at the national level. For smaller countries with limited human and financial resources, it is impossible to participate in all the networks that would be of interest to potential project participants. In order to avoid unintentional fragmentation of the ERA, a thorough analysis and mapping should be done before programming future support for research and innovation activities via co-funding schemes.

It is evident that public investments in science and innovation should benefit societal needs. The **Open Science** paradigm should entail open access to publicly funded research publications and data, also research infrastructures in FPs. For this purpose, digital instruments should also be taken advantage of, with a special focus on e-infrastructures and standardization of open research data. Certainly, the open science approach should comply with intellectual property rights, personal data protection, confidentiality provisions, security issues and other legal aspects.

To increase **transparency**, specification of calls as well as requirements for applicants should be more accurate and clear, including specific details on expected outcomes and impact as it was already noted on excellence above. Also, clearly formulated and described proposal evaluation criteria would provide better guidance for experts evaluating proposals of this kind. There is a need for greater diversity in geographical and gender representation in expert panels, especially for evaluation of proposals in some particular calls. More efforts should be put in the training and pre-selection of expert panels, ensuring unbiased and qualitative evaluation process and evaluation results. The closer-to-the-market attitude requires the involvement of experts with practitioner experience to mirror the end-user approach. Last but not least, evaluation summary reports, even for unsuccessful applicants, should include clear argumentation and evidence regarding the presented conclusions and scores awarded to the proposal, thus providing opportunity for applicants to improve their proposals in the future.

Further **simplification** of accounting and auditing procedures should be continued. To shorten time-to-grant procedure, one -stage submission process for the individual or smaller-financial scale projects could be a solution. A two-stage submission procedure should aim be used for larger financial commitment.

Special attention should be devoted to the publicity of Horizon 2020 projects' results as well their future impact while increasing **dissemination** activities, especially with the purpose to indicate the impact of projects for the spectrum of societal areas. This can have a great value in attracting larger interest from business and private investments as well as best researchers and top innovators to the European Research Area.