



LUXCOR position paper on the Horizon 2020 interim evaluation (Jan. 2017)

LUXCOR – the Luxembourg Contact Office for Research and Innovation – is a joint venture between the six main RDI stakeholder organisations in Luxembourg: the University of Luxembourg, the Luxembourg Institute of Science and Technology, the Luxembourg Institute of Health, the Luxembourg Institute of Socio-economic Research, the Luxembourg National Research Fund (FNR), Luxinnovation – the national innovation agency.

We want to highlight very positive trends and achievements in Horizon 2020 which we would like to see maintained and strengthened in the future. In addition, we would like to suggest some improvements based on our experience with Horizon 2020.

- We welcome the introduction of the three pillars in Horizon 2020, ‘Excellent Science’, ‘Industrial Leadership’ and ‘Societal Challenges’. While covering the whole TRL value chain, better coordination between pillars – and their related funding instruments – should be envisaged.
- Excellence is and should remain the main criterion for Horizon 2020. The success of excellence is shown by the ERC grantees and the continuous support of lower TRL levels should be maintained.
- We recognise the importance of ERA and highly support the goals to foster research collaborations within Europe and pooling of resources in order to increase the competitiveness globally. In that aspect, the better integration of EU13 countries is very important and the WIDENING programme is to be continued. Moreover, Horizon 2020 should strengthen its efforts in pan-European Research Infrastructures.
- In order to achieve the ambitious goals of Horizon 2020 without compromise, an adequate budget is required. The recent budget cuts led to very low success rates and might hamper the achievement of the initial objectives. In particular, there is a risk of losing excellent applicants and disruptive research impact.
- Loans and risk-financing instruments should not be used for funding academic research.
- The Open Access Policy in Horizon 2020 is a success and should be continued. Based on the European model, the Luxembourg National Funding Agency (FNR) introduced its new policy ¹ on Open Access publications. Open Access is considered the first step towards Open Science, a topic of high importance to ERA.
- It is important to note that the impact of science to society goes far beyond economic and short-term impact and cannot only be measured via TRLs.

¹ <https://www.fnr.lu/new-fnr-open-access-policy-funding-instrument/?hilite=open+access>

- Horizon 2020 has successfully achieved simplification in various areas compared to FP7. Some very positive examples are the participant portal and the reduced Time-To-Grant. One should not lose the goal of further and continuously optimising administrative processes.
- Social Science and Humanities (SSH) are very important. Social inclusion, employment and robotisation of jobs are very good examples of important research topics and are well reflected in the Societal Challenge 6. Though, as suggested in the Science Europe position statement ² SSH should be better integrated in Pillar 3 throughout the complete value chain – from the drafting of the workprogrammes to the final evaluation phase. Moreover, as highlighted by the Net4Society position paper ³ SSH may also foster interdisciplinarity.
- Interdisciplinarity is key and is particularly reflected in the Pillar 3. To successfully address these Societal Challenges, however, input from Pillars 1 and 2 is required and better integration of joint funding instruments should be aimed for.
- We support a strategic approach to international cooperation with third countries as highlighted in the Science Europe position statement.
- On the management and administrative side of Horizon 2020:
 - A high attention has to be drawn for tackling the lower success rates in Horizon 2020 with respect to FP7. Several measures might be taken including: increase the overall Horizon 2020 budget; drill down the number of topics in the workprogrammes; improve the proposal submissions' filtering process in order to avoid underfunding / oversubscription.
 - There should be more budget flexibility in order to fund reserve list proposals.
 - The workprogramme calls for proposals should leave no room for interpretation for example by providing compact notes such as the CNECT G1 Unit's technical background notes and checklists ⁴.
 - The Evaluation Summary Reports should be more detailed and not only be the sum of the individual evaluations but should reflect the arguments for the funding decision.
 - Whenever possible, small-sized consortia should be privileged.
- The European ecosystem should increase further attraction of Horizon 2020 for the industry and in particular SMEs through tailored communication patterns and programme demystification.

² http://www.scienceeurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/SE_Position_Statement_H2020.pdf

³ http://www.net4society.eu/_media/20161110_N4S_Position_InterimEvaluation_final.pdf

⁴ <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/events/cf/ict-proposers-day-2016/item-display.cfm?id=18467>