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Academy of Finland Position Paper on Horizon 2020 Interim Evaluation

With this position paper, the Academy of Finland – the Research Council of Finland – wishes to contribute to the Interim Evaluation of the Horizon 2020 Framework Programme. Horizon 2020 is an integral tool in promoting excellence in European research, providing a basis for a broad range of innovations benefiting the economy and society at large. Overall, the three pillars and the challenge-based and solution-oriented approach of Horizon 2020 have worked well.

However, because of changes in the operational environment and based on experiences from the first half of Horizon 2020, there are still things that could and should be improved. In this position paper, the Academy of Finland wishes to draw the European Commission's attention especially to issues relating to ***excellence, impact, open science, the European Research Area, and evaluation procedures and simplification.***

Excellent research and research environments are essential to impact and innovations

- Excellence should be maintained as the guiding principle throughout Horizon 2020.
- The ERC has put European frontier research on the world map in a new way, attracting excellent scientists to Europe from all over the world. For these reasons, it is crucial that the ERC's funding be kept at a sufficient level.
- The grand societal challenges set out in Horizon 2020 pillar III are highly complex and multidimensional. To cope with the challenges, it is fundamentally important to ensure a strong knowledge-base and develop long-term solutions. This necessitates top-quality transdisciplinary research, including the social sciences and humanities in a cross-cutting role. Furthermore, identifying and solving challenges facing European society, such as migration and security, has benefited from having a dedicated programme (SC6), which should thus be continued.
- There is a continued need for support for researcher mobility. Cross-border mobility in Europe and beyond is fundamental for fostering excellent researchers with wide networks and for the renewal of science. Inter-sectoral mobility has an important role in increasing the impact of research.
- ESFRI cooperation offers an important platform and a strong foundation for high-quality research and innovation by providing common platforms attractive to both researchers and private partners. It is fundamentally important to ensure that ESFRI continues to promote the infrastructure needs of a broad range of scientific fields, and not only some. The financial support from the Horizon 2020 programme to European research infrastructures is of great importance.

Impact of research is underpinned by excellence and enhanced by interaction

- Impact needs to be understood broadly. In addition to having a significant role as a source of prosperity and well-being, science builds world-view and knowledge, supports practice development and offers well-founded basis for decision making. To achieve impact in all these complex areas, it is fundamentally important to ensure the excellence of research. It is also important to understand the varying timeframes and channels of impact in different areas.
- The interaction of researchers, policy-makers and other end-users enhances the societal impact of research; the dissemination of research results is not enough. Therefore, a requirement for interaction, starting already when applications are drafted, could be considered in some Horizon 2020 instruments. In Finland's funding instrument for strategic research, this practice has proven effective in developing new capacities for interaction in support of producing faster and

greater scientific impact. (see www.aka.fi/en/research-and-science-policy/strategic-research-funding)

Open science enhances the quality and impact of research

- The work in the field of open science needs to be continued. The European Commission should implement open science approached in all of its research and innovation activities and not only in Horizon 2020.
- The Commission has strong leverage in promoting open access publishing. Close cooperation with national stakeholders, including research and innovation funders, is essential. In addition, it is important to create optimal procedures for making data available, storing and managing data and ensuring the usability of data.
- Open innovation, based on high-quality research, can provide a strong basis for breakthroughs in society and business. The linear model of innovation should be replaced by the quadruple innovation helix approach, at an even higher rate than the EC has done thus far.

Public-to-public partnerships are crucial in building a European Research Area

- P2P actions are needed to fund research in areas that are of common interest to several Member States and to facilitate the building of the still dysfunctional ERA. In order to achieve cost-effectiveness and more impact, participants in any P2P action need to make a genuine commitment to funding joint activities.
- In Horizon 2020, ERA-NET Cofund has been a successful instrument in raising Member States' interest in participating in joint calls. However, in research areas where there is a need for several consecutive calls, the Cofund instrument is too heavy to administrate. Therefore, there should be more flexibility to run several co-funded calls with the Commission, when needed.
- Article 185 initiatives (e.g. BONUS, the Joint Baltic Sea Research Programme) provide a useful and important way for Member States to develop long-term partnerships and integrate their national research programmes in a given field. However, at the moment, the application and reporting procedures are too complex and take too long.
- P2P actions are a good instrument for fostering international collaboration with third countries on strategically important areas. P2P instruments are attractive for third countries as long as they are low in bureaucracy and contractual difficulties with the European Commission are solved.

Evaluation process can be improved and simplification measures must be continued

- The number of partners within a consortium cannot be viewed as a value in itself. Smaller projects and consortia are also capable of doing top-quality research with wide impact and European added value.
- Two-stage calls can be an answer to the problem of oversubscription, but it is important to only let a number of applications proportional to the available funding through to the second stage. Success rates in the second stage of two-stage calls should in no case fall below 20 per cent.
- Further simplification measures are still needed to clarify the landscape of framework programme instruments and to make funding processes easier for participants.

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The Academy of Finland – the Research Council of Finland – promotes high-quality, high-impact research as well as the renewal and internationalisation of Finnish science. In 2016, the Academy of Finland's research funding budget was 426 million euros. Read more at www.aka.fi/en.