

# BIGGER, BETTER HORIZON 2020

## THE VIEW FROM EUROPE

Anybody having a conversation with a research administrator in Europe these days should be prepared to hear the term “Horizon 2020,” and that it may be uttered with both apprehension and little bit of healthy suspicion. “Horizon 2020” is the name for the 8<sup>th</sup> Framework Program for research and innovation of the EU Commission, a program that will run from 2014 until 2020 and that will be the biggest research funding program in the world, totaling c. €70 billion.

Research at the European level has been organized in so called framework programs since 1984, and those “FP’s” have contributed to creating the European Research Area (ERA), a strategic priority for the EU, and deeply affected research administration in Europe. Each framework program has had its set of rules and regulations, and those have not always been simple and straightforward.

After having evaluated the previous FP’s, particularly FP7 (which never got a spiffy name like its successor), the EU Commission decided to make some important changes in Horizon 2020:

- In previous FP’s, each instrument or funding program could have – and did have – its own set of rules, and those sets of rules sometimes varied in confounding ways. In Horizon 2020, there will be emphasis on simplification, and one single set of Rules for Participation that will apply to all funding instruments.
- Horizon 2020 will strengthen the connection between research and innovation in order to satisfy the political goals, and of course to shorten the time from idea to invention.

Compared to previous FP’s Horizon 2020 has a more coherent organization, and is divided into three pillars, each addressing a particular strategic goal:

- *Societal Challenges* deals with 7 specific, broad themes, addressing major concerns like climate change, the ageing population, renewable energy, safe and secure societies, and others.
- *Strengthening Industrial Leadership* invests in key technologies and includes both some almost science fiction-like big projects and support for small and medium-sized enterprises.
- *Excellent Science*, finally, aims to provide a boost to top-level science in Europe, as well as supporting European research careers. This pillar includes the European Research Council (ERC), which is the part of Horizon 2020 that is most similar to a traditional research funding agency.

The EU has been teeming with activities preparing for the launch of Horizon 2020 at the beginning of 2014, and the first calls, that are published in so called “work programs,” will be released in December 2013. During October-November, the activities could best be described as frantic, and the amount of information, and the speed with which it changes have been dizzying. As I am writing this, near-final drafts of Rules for Participation, a Model Agreement, and most work programs have been made publicly available (see link), so we are finally getting there.

Horizon 2020 is thus very much in the minds of many, if not most European research administrators right now, and will continue to be so for the foreseeable future. For all the hype, it is sobering to consider that Horizon 2020 may be the biggest research program that the EU has ever launched, but it still only represents c. 5% of European research funding; the remaining 95% is spent on national research funding. ■

---

**Olaf Svenningsen** - Head of Southern Denmark Research Support at The University of Southern Denmark (SDU) and the Region of Southern Denmark



Read more about Horizon 2020: [http://ec.europa.eu/research/horizon2020/index\\_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/research/horizon2020/index_en.cfm)

Download the Horizon 2020 official documents, including the work programs/calls:  
[http://ec.europa.eu/research/horizon2020/index\\_en.cfm?pg=h2020-documents](http://ec.europa.eu/research/horizon2020/index_en.cfm?pg=h2020-documents)