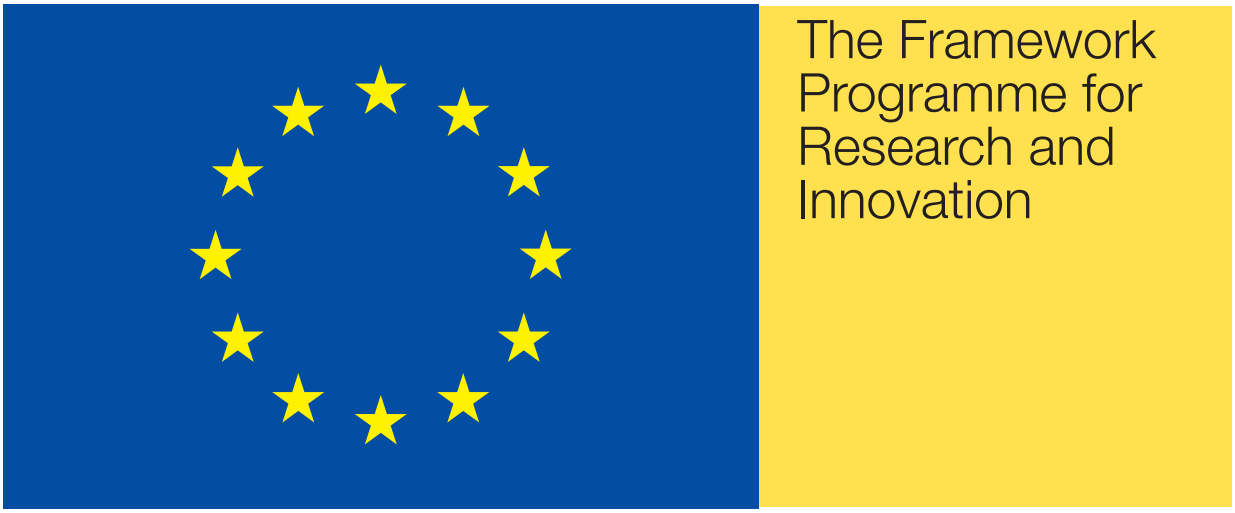

Horizon 2020 for U.S. Researchers – What's in it for me?

By Jesse J.K. Szeto

In the Jan/Feb 2014 issue, our colleague Olaf Svenningsen (University of Southern Denmark) provided an excellent overview of Horizon 2020, which is the European Commission's research and innovation funding program for the next seven years (2014-2020). Totaling €77 billion (approximately US $105 billion) and covering topics ranging from basic science to complex societal issues like climate change, Horizon 2020 is one of the world's most ambitious and wide-ranging research programs open not only to the European Union's universities, research centers, and small and medium-sized enterprises but also to non-European entities.

In fact, Horizon 2020 explicitly encourages participation from international partner countries (IPCs), which are countries that are neither European Union (EU) Member States nor Associated States. While entities from industrialized IPCs (such as the U.S.) are not automatically eligible for funding, they are eligible to be consortia partners and benefit accordingly with regards to IP rights, research results, etc. Furthermore, U.S. entities may receive funding under the following conditions:

1. Funding for such entities is provided for under a bilateral scientific and technological agreement or any other arrangement between the European Union and a particular country, or
2. The European Commission deems the entity's participation to be essential for the purpose of the project.

Because of a bilateral agreement between the U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the European Commission, U.S. institutions are eligible to receive funding from any call that is in the "Health, demographic change and well-being" program area. In addition, U.S. entities that have a legal basis in the European Union or an Associated State, such as a branch campus, would potentially be eligible to apply for any funding. Furthermore, U.S. entities that are working with developing countries should note that entities in developing country IPCs are generally eligible to receive funding.

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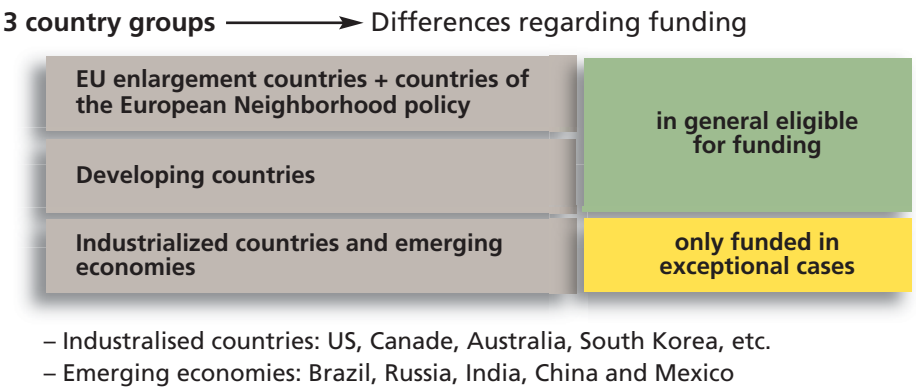
Based on the European Commission's previous research funding cycle (2007 – 2013), we have seen that U.S. institutions have often participated as consortia partners even when they have not been eligible to receive funding. In fact, more than 450 U.S. institutions participated under various categories, and some of them were able to receive funding totaling €76 million (approximately US$103 million). After Russia, the U.S. was the most successful IPC in applying for research support from the European Commission, with the most common topics being health, ICT (Information and Communications Technology), food and agriculture, biotechnology, and energy.

Two other programs that could be of particular interest to U.S. researchers and institutions are the following:

1. ERC (European Research Council) grants – these are most similar to U.S. federal agencies' investigator awards, and the topics are open to "pioneering ideas" and "investigator-driven frontier research", including social sciences and humanities topics. At least 50% of the research must be carried out in an institution in an EU Member State or Associated State.
2. Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions – these are similar to fellowships for doctoral and postdoctoral researchers, and they encourage investigators to engage in "transnational, intersectoral and interdisciplinary mobility". Thus, European investigators often take their award to a U.S. institution since the U.S. is the top "transnational" destination for European investigators.



As in most instances, research collaboration will be driven by Principle Investigators (PIs) who want to work with their colleagues on exciting projects that have the potential for successful results and meaningful publications. Thus, even if their institution is not eligible for European funding in a particular case, U.S. research administrators may find that their PIs may be eager for their institution to sign agreements to become a member of consortia that are applying for Horizon 2020 calls. Based on an NCURA survey of 25 top research universities in the U.S., 24 of them agreed to the terms and conditions of the European Commission's award, even when they sometimes did not receive any funding. Thus, for those research administrators who may be facing this situation for the first time, please reach out to your NCURA colleagues (such as through the Global Collaborate Community) who have gone through this before.

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Other resources available to U.S. researchers and research administrators include the following:

Funding Opportunities

Link to Horizon 2020 funding opportunities search portal: http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/opportunities/h2020/index.html

Link to the ERC: http://erc.europa.eu/

Link to the Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions: http://ec.europa.eu/research/mariecurieactions

Resources for U.S. Researchers

January 22, 2014, webinar on "Funding Opportunities for US researchers in Horizon 2020" by Olaf Ripken, National Contact Point for International Cooperation, DLR, Germany: http://www.euussciencetechnology.eu/sites/default/files/Webinar_USA_20140122.pdf

February 19, 2014, webinar on "Funding Possibilities for US Researchers within the European Research Council (ERC)" by Yiva Huber, National Contact Point for ERC, FFG, Austria: see http://www.euussciencetechnology.eu/sites/default/files/BILAT-USA20_ERC-Webinar_Feb19_web.pdf

BILAT USA 2.0 – a resource for research collaboration between the U.S. and the EU: http://www.euussciencetechnology.eu

EURAXESS Researchers in Motion – a resource for researchers wishing to pursue research careers in Europe: http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/index.cfm/links/eurRes/north_america

NCURA's Global Collaborate Community – for NCURA members: http://collaborate.ncura.edu/communities/viewallcommunities For non-members, please sign up to receive access information: http://s.zoomerang.com/Survey/WEB22FUVWP5QFJ

General Horizon 2020 Resources

Horizon 2020 website: http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/en

How to sign up to be an expert reviewer: http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/experts/index.html

List of developing countries eligible to receive funding (Note: Brazil, Russia, India, and China are NOT eligible): http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/wp/2014_2015/annexes/h2020-wp1415-annex-a-countries-rules_en.pdf